

FEAR

• HORROR

FANTASY

• SCIENCE FICTION



ROBOCOP 2

Mean metal machine!

HARLAN ELLISON
Bites back!

BRIAN STABLEFORD
Runs with the Wolves



NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD

Bigger, better,
bloodier?

PLUS Pages of
fiction!

Reviewed! MOVIES • BOOKS • COMICS
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LUNCH WITH TAD WILLIAMS

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The scorching heat of the summer sun can drive animals and humans alike to madness. Burning, febrile limbs reach out for water, while the mind... well, what better place to find sustenance on the beach than between the pages of your everloving FEAR?

This issue, Harlan Ellison offers some dangerous visions in his first major interview for eighteen years, while director Tom Savini provides chills after dark with a remake of the classic Night Of The Living Dead. And, as if you need more entertainment, RoboCop 2 clanks into action to prevent technocrime in a city of the future, and Brian Stableford embarks on a magical mystery tour to find the Werewolves Of London. Finally, if you want some time to yourself, leave your kids with The Guardian while we interrogate director William Friedkin. All that, and our usual pressurised mix of reviews, news and fiction.

Don't look to us to soothe your blistered nerves — burn yourself raw with this month's sizzling issue.

FEAR

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MIND OVER METAL

The handsome hunk in tin foil is back to wage war against crooked business magnates, drug barons and the low life scum of Old Detroit. J B Macabre takes his can opener along to the set of *RoboCop 2*.

Peter Weller is back as the half man, half machine law enforcement officer RoboCop; but he may not be on the beat much longer. Omni Consumer Products, the company which helped to create him, is about to unveil a new improved model. One that is not defective in its programming and which does not possess the touches of humanity and fleeting memories of its former self as a murdered copy named Murphy.

Meantime, the cops of Old Detroit are on strike and the city is in default. A deadly designer drug, Nuke, is raking in the profits and only RoboCop and a group of loyal officers are on the job to protect the public. Robo, with his partner Anne Lewis (Nancy Allen), must try to stop the mystic, malevolent drug dealer Cain and prevent the Old Man from achieving his goal of destroying Old Detroit and creating his new metropolis.

Directed by Irvin Kershner and based on a screenplay by Walcon Green and Frank Miller, *RoboCop 2* picks up the tempo of the original film and is full of the same dark, prophetic humour.

Frank Miller, who is best known as the creative talent behind comic novels such as *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* and *Elektra: Assassin*, was excited about the opportunity to write the sequel: I was fascinated by the original *RoboCop*. I loved the crucifixion/resurrection theme and I loved the film's sick humour, its all-out assault on the excesses of the Eighties. What really attracted me, though, was the depth and mystique of the

character himself.

The challenge for this film was to retain the spirit of the original but take *RoboCop* in a new direction, preferably several new directions. OCP's merciless exploitation of *RoboCop* is a logical extension of his invention in the first film, while the fate of fictional Old Detroit mirrors our own world — particularly our drug problem.

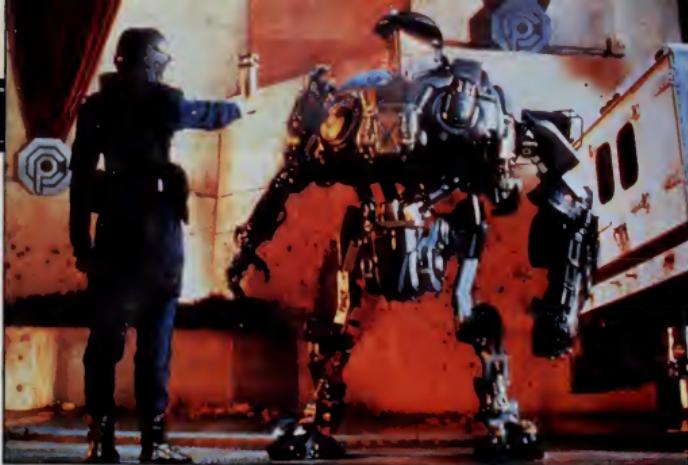
Producer John Davison, who brought the team together for the first film, was reluctant to make a sequel. *RoboCop* was such an incredibly tough shoot, I wasn't prepared to go through it all again simply to recycle what worked before. Unless we had a story which gave the character another dimension, and a director with the vision to pull it off, I wasn't interested.

TRAGIC CONFLICT

The Frank Miller-Walcon Green script helped persuade Davison and Kershner to come on board and their additional clout enabled the film to get the green light. 'Along with a flair for fantasy and adventure, Kershner has a real feeling for characterisation. The idea of an action director who is also an actor's director was very appealing,' says Davison.

Irvin Kershner is a seasoned director whose career spans some thirty years. His credits include such films as *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Never Say Never Again*, the latter of which saw the return of Sean Connery as James Bond after a twelve year absence from the role.

Yet, for all his directorial experience, Kershner was glad not to have the burden of creating the



concept of RoboCop. 'I didn't have to set up who RoboCop is... they did all that for me in the first film... so I could concentrate on what happens to him.'

When you think of RoboCop, you may think of a shoot-em-up with a few good laughs. But what intrigued me was that *RoboCop 2*, like the original, has satire, social comment and an appealing yet tragic conflict in the hero himself, along with weird and interesting villains. Man versus machine is a time honoured myth... but it's unusual to find it in the same character.'

Though Peter Weller returns to play Robo in the sequel, he was concerned about reprising the role: 'The character itself is not a surprise this time, so we couldn't get by on just the novelty of the guy, which was a large part of the attraction in *RoboCop*. So, if a robot everyone knows was going to carry this entire film, whatever was going to be new had to come by way of deepening or enriching the life of the human inside the machine. That's the dilemma — that's the conflict. Is he a man or a machine?'

The special effects team on the film helped to provide part of the answer to Peter's question, while

the human side remained a challenge for the actor alone: 'I knew that I had a golden opportunity to broaden the character,' he says, 'to reveal the soul of this impressive machine.' Peter studied with the acclaimed mime coach Moni Yakim for six months prior to the start of filming in order to achieve the body language that would be mechanical, yet graceful and expressive. There's more humanity and, if anything, even more action in this film than there was the first time. But the challenge always remains, to create life within a scientific marvel. It's a matter of perspective — what it came down to was attitude — mind over metal, so to speak.'

STUNT SUITS

While Peter was refining the man, Rob Bottin was at work on the machine. Rob is a talented make-up/special effects artist, whose credits include such films as *The Howling*, John Carpenter's *The Thing* and *Total Recall*. 'Nothing prepared me for the original *RoboCop*', Rob admits. 'This time, even before I read the script, I knew there would be some intriguing new challenges.'

One of Rob's early decisions was to refurbish Robo's steel cas-

OCP's new creation *RoboCop 2* (above), director Irvin Kershner (left), friendly community cop Weller (below)

ing. 'Early in the first project, we rejected metal as too cumbersome, opting instead for latex and fibreglass. This time we went completely with fibreglass, which allowed Peter Weller greater mobility and saved a lot of time in wardrobe and make-up.'

For the more hazardous demands of *RoboCop 2*, Chris Walas adapted Rob's designs to create a special line of "stunt suits". Chris's credits include the character design on *Gremlins*, and he won an Oscar for his work on the remake of *The Fly*.

One of the most memorable non-human characters of *RoboCop 2* was ED 209, which was brought to life by stop motion animation master Phil Tippett.

While both Phil and ED 209 are back for the sequel, Phil's major responsibility is *RoboCop 2* with its monstrous strength, massive fire power and demented mind. Tippett received an Oscar for the 'Walker' sequence of *The Empire Strikes Back*.

The complexity of *RoboCop 2* required Phil to set up nine different animation teams. While ED 209 was clumsy and crab-like, there's a terrifyingly quick and powerful quality to *RoboCop 2*. That's incredibly difficult to capture in stop motion, and it sets him apart from anything we've ever done before.'

Newcomers to the *RoboCop* team include computer graphics supervisor Paul Sammon and artist Mike Ribble, whose work added some 35 minutes of computer graphics on location as opposed to the usual costly approach of developing them in post production. In addition, de Graaf/Wahrman Inc of Los Angeles have created new computer graphics: When Dr Faxon raises the drug lord, Cain, from the dead, he encounters a mental image of himself... a 'living' computer generated death mask,' says Davison. 'It has never before been used in a movie.'

The original *RoboCop* was shot in Dallas, but this time Davison turned to Houston to have it double for Old Detroit, taking advantage of an 'ideal combination' of heavy industry and a futuristic skyline. 'That's the beauty of science fiction,' says Kershner. 'It not only takes you where reality can't, but frequently serves as a futuristic mirror, reflecting today's society by imagining tomorrow's world.'

RoboCop 2 opens at the Odeon West End, London on 12 October.



THE WORLD OF FEAR

VAMPIRE TECHNOLOGY

Brian Stableford's critically acclaimed *Empire Of Fear* gave the vampire theme a new twist, applying rational theories to one of the oldest satanic myths. The *Werewolves Of London*, his newly published novel, continues this preoccupation with the plight of fallen angels. Stan Nicholls creeps out before daybreak to glean the scientific facts.

A biologist and sociologist by training, Brian Stableford was a university lecturer until a year and a half ago, when he began writing full time. Although not originally ambitious to write professionally, he started young, selling his first story to *Science Fantasy* magazine in 1965.

I cottedton on fairly quickly that it was rather difficult to make a living out of it, he says, 'and noted the way the market fluctuated quite dramatically. So I didn't really have any intention of doing it full time.'

I finally decided to make the change partly because I was increasingly unhappy with the low morale and spending cuts at Reading University. My self esteem was not really tied up in teaching, which had become fairly mechanical by then. The time had come to make a decision, rather than spend another 25 years earning my pension by reciting the same lectures and seminars over and over again. I had books scheduled to come out, so it was possible for me to hand in my notice and plunge into work already under contract.'

He made his debut as a novelist in 1969, with *Cradle Of The Sun*, which was followed by a number of other colourful space operas.



Brian Stableford

The first few novels I sold to Ace were all extremely violent, very extravagant stories of action. Some of them are so extreme several of the central characters get killed twice! There were at least two in which the entire *dramatis personae* are destroyed. Having written half a dozen like that, I began to wonder why I was doing it. I'm actually quite a mild-mannered person, and got a bit worried about the level of violence in the books. Then there was a period where I'd written three novels that weren't picked up by a publisher. So when Dave started, and I was invited to submit an outline for a possible series, I thought I'd better write something that would sell. I outlined what was essentially a concatenation of clichés borrowed from *Planet Stories*, which Don Wollheim promptly accepted, as I thought he probably would.'

The result was the popular Star-Pilot Grainger series, beginning with *The Halcyon Drift* in 1972. 'But when I sat down to write, I found it rather difficult to do the clichés with a straight face. So what happened was that, without entirely meaning to, all the clichés got sort of subverted on the way. The character himself was rather sarcastic and forever looking for other ways out of problems than would have been sanctified in *Planet Stories*. I made up my mind early on that Grainger was not only never going to shoot anybody, he wasn't even going to

hit anybody. He does jog someone's elbow in volume five, but that's all.'

I wrote two six-book series for Daw, but parted company with them when they went in a different direction, and became very much a fantasy publisher at a time when I was still wanting to write science fiction. I became frustrated that Don Wollheim would only accept books that looked to be clones of the earlier ones. Which was one reason I stopped writing SF novels in the early Eighties, a five year period when I concentrated on non-fiction.

WILD LONER

Stableford has returned to the field with *The Empire Of Fear*, a critically acclaimed alternate world novel, nominated for the Arthur C Clarke Award earlier this year, that gives the vampire theme a new twist. 'There had been a boom in exercises in vampire existentialism which seemed basically science fictional in outlook, even though they were mostly fantasy novels which did not rationalise what happened. Chelsea Quinn Yarbro's novels, Suzy McKee Charnas' *Vampire Tapestry* and others, explored what it could actually be like to be a vampire. But they all took on board this idea that the vampire had to be a rare fugitive evading hordes of Van Helsing-like pursuers. A kind of wild loner. It seemed to me that if one were

going to look at it seriously, to suppose there could be such things as vampires and work out how in bio-chemical terms that could be the case, then once they were there they would probably rule the world. So I decided I was going to write an alternate history novel in which I put the vampires in the place of the historical rulers.'

Why set the book in the seventeenth century? What interested me was the idea that, although vampirism in my story is provided with an underlying chemistry, that wouldn't be known either to the vampires themselves or the people they ruled, until you reach that point in history at which the scientific outlook begins to get going. It's a science fiction novel not so much because vampirism is in the last section explained bio-chemically, but because the hero of the book, the central character in a way, is the scientific outlook. Which I tie very much to Francis Bacon's idea that once you begin to get rid of the idols of false belief, and strip away the layers of superstition to see things as they are, you have a chance of taking control of them.

I wanted to write a novel about the discovery of the fact that vampirism wasn't supernatural, it wasn't a kind of satanic evil; that it was in fact something which could be understood and possibly taken over. It could become a technology.'

NASTY-MINDED

This rational attitude does not mean that he has no time for 'non-logical' branches of the genre, like fantasy. 'It's not that I have little interest in them, it's just that my interest is in them as phenomena. My new book, *The Werewolves Of London* [Simon and Shuster], is much more a kind of metaphysical fantasy. It isn't science fiction like *Empire Of Fear* because there isn't ever any scientific explanation. But it proceeds in the same way. It's really a fantasy about the precepts of horror novels. In lots of horror stories it's just accepted that there are enormously powerful, nasty-minded beings who work behind the scenes producing all the effects that terrify the characters. I wanted to ask the question that, if we take as a premise that there can be these awesomely powerful beings, what sort of beings are they? What sort of universe do we have to have in order to accommodate entities like that? What are they actually attempting to do with themselves? *The Werewolves Of London* is the first of three books which will develop that idea. It's an alternate universe story in the sense

SNIP! SNIP!

CREW'LL LIES

SKELETON CREW



Dave Hughes, editor of *Skeleton Crew*, the fanzine turned semi-prozine, has been sacked by publisher Argus Specialist Press, reportedly for 'behaviour incompatible with his position'.

A source close to Argus revealed that Hughes' sudden departure was sparked off by features planned for the second issue, one of which included an editorial which berated a certain big magazine retail chain over censorship over words such as 'fuck'. In *Skeleton Crew* such verbal shockers had to be deleted from the Stephen King short story, 'The Reroids'.

Early copies of issue 2 were shown around at Interzone's

recent Brian Aldiss birthday bash (one fell onto the desk of FEAR editor John Gilbert), and, shortly after, Hughes was asked to withdraw the offending pages. He omitted to do so and was hurriedly removed from the magazine of which he is the co-copyright holder. Approximately 20,000 copies were withdrawn, to be rebound without the risqué material.

Group editor Stuart Cooke has taken over temporarily and intends to reshape the magazine's content. 'Dave came to an agreement with the company, and in Issue 2 he blatantly ignored company guidelines so, unfortunately, he was instantly dismissed.'

Of Hughes's accusation that a major distributor had banned four letter words from *Skeleton Crew*, Cooke says: 'There was no major retailer. Argus has a particular policy over such words and Dave did not follow it.'

David Hughes commented: 'I wrote something for the magazine that, if the guy who had bought the magazine for Argus had been around, I would have just got a slapped wrist. But he was laid off two weeks before and so he couldn't protect me.'

Meanwhile, Argus is looking for a part time editor for the title. The company is apparently committed to six



Exit stage left: David Hughes, erstwhile editor of *Skeleton Crew*

months of publication, but one source put its likely run at four. The much-vaunted star signings have also been suddenly cancelled. We will, of course, keep readers up to date with any significant developments.

that it assumes the universe is subject to further acts of creation and recreation. Magic is accommodated at the metaphysical level rather than by being given any scientific explanation. But I still wanted these nasty, powerful forces to have some sort of motivational strategy, to have a project of their own.

In a sense, I quite like stories where it's impossible to work out quite what has happened, or why, and the characters have to live with the uncertainty of it. But it's difficult to do that at novel length, where you have to have a more elaborate structure. If I'm going to have a character who for some period of time is exposed to the kind of phenomena you find in horror novels, I would want him to sit down and think, 'What does this imply? What are the logical consequences of these happenings?' And I would want him actually to make some progress. In a short story it's sufficient for him to run up against a blank wall of

incomprehension, but in a novel you have to have more than that.'

Empire Of Fear, although indisputably a science fiction novel, represents a trend towards genre crossovers. The book, as it were, combines several genres, and there are echoes in it of Rider Haggard in respect of the long journey to a lost land in the middle of Africa. But I've always been very disappointed in Haggard in that his journeys across Africa sound like a walk in Regent's Park shooting the occasional antelope.

Writers like Dean Koontz have been accused of cooking their books up by recipe, by combining thriller, horror and science fiction. To what extent that's true I don't know, but it does seem that he, at least, has had some success in capturing a wide audience by recruiting from different genres. But in my case, during the period when I wasn't writing very much, I did an awful lot of research on the history of imaginative fiction,

and contributed to most of the reference books. So I've absorbed a lot of information and knowledge of what's been done in the past.

Tm really quite interested in the evolution of ideas, and all those influences tend to combine in things I write, sometimes very eccentrically. It's because the influences are feeding in from these various directions that I'm trying to do books that aren't locked within the preconceptions of a particular genre.'

The Empire Of Fear by Brian Stableford is published by Pan Books, price £7.99. The book was reviewed in FEAR Issue 19. The Werewolves Of London is published by Simon and Schuster, price £14.95 and is reviewed in this issue.

● Storm Constantine's new novel, *Hermetech* will be published in January by Headline.

● The British Deaf Association, 20:20 Vision and RCA/Columbia Video UK have started to produce subtitled videos of top films such as *Ghostbusters 2* which will be available from rental stores across the country. A list of stores supporting the project can be obtained from the local press or the British Deaf Association on (071) 735 8171.

● Forbidden Planet launch their assault on the *Nightbreed* with a signing on 29 September, the day after the movie is due for London release. Clive Barker will be there with the co-authors of *The Making of Nightbreed* and *Nightbreed Chronicles* books. We also suggest you get your copies of FEAR for the signing, as *Making Of...* co-authors John Gilbert and Mark Salisbury will be delving into the darker parts of the film untouched by other publications.



Mary Gentle

● Mary Gentle's new fantasy novel, *Rats And Gargoyles*, has been entered for the 1990 Booker Prize by publisher Bantam. Who says that fantasy is not serious literature?

● American author and mail order bookseller Robert Weinberg has just sold his new novel, *The Dead Man's Kiss* to Pocket Books for a five figure sum. His next novel is *The Black Lodge*, to be published in February 1991. Also, due in October, the anthology *Lovcraft's Legacy*, co-edited with Martin H Greenberg.

● Star Trek author Diane Duane has sold a fantasy trilogy to Corgi Books. Her work in progress is *Dawn To Sunset*.

THE WORLD OF FEAR

IDOL IN TERMINATOR 2

The latest screen chat from our man on the spot, John Glenday.

After a lack of interest in his ethereal love story *Always*, Steven Spielberg is to take a year off. His treatment of *Guy Named Joe* remake proved too saccharin for Joe Public, who replied with a nonchalant raspberry at the box office. There is little doubt that this



Our Stephen with his most popular creation

had a hand in prompting his sabbatical. But in a recent interview with Barry Norman, Spielberg expressed an interest in directing a *dinosaur movie*. The project he was talking of was Michael Crichton's new novel, *Jurassic Park*. The story details the creation of an American fun park based in prehistoric times and filled with genetically recreated dinosaurs. The dinosaurs get out of hand and attack their creators. Spielberg had promised to direct the movie version of the stage musical *Phantom Of The Opera*, but latest word is that Joel (*Lost Boys*) Schumaker will step in.

Gremlins 2 also received a cool box office reception in the US this summer. Director Joe Dante's frenzied approach proved too much for American audiences to take in, but any true film buff will take delight at the usual array of in-jokes. Anyone who wants an insight into his creative lunacy should watch out for British filmmaker Grant Littlechild's excellent documentary based on Dante's career. Also included are interviews with Roger Corman and Dick Miller.



As for Dante's next project, it could be either a remake of *Gulliver's Travels* or *The Universal Soldier*, another Vietnam story with a twist. The ghost of a soldier killed in 'Nam rises from his grave in the Arlington War Cemetery to protect an old army buddy whose life is threatened by the mob.

Latest news on T2 (*Terminator 2*): the sequel features Linda Hamilton being hunted down by two terminators in the Mexican desert. The new and improved killing machines are played by Arnold Schwarzenegger and rock star Billy Idol.

Elm Street 6 will definitely be subtitled *Freddy's Dead*. Former Freddy producer Rachel Talalay will direct with a budget between eight and ten million dollars, a reasonable size this time. Wes Craven's influence should be minimal, as New Line may not want to keep its promise of no more sequels.

Expect a *Highlander 3* even before we see number 2. Subtitled *The Magician*, the film stars Christopher Lambert reprising his role as McLeod, but the main influence on both movies, Russell Mulcahy, won't be holding the directorial reins.

Schwarzenegger has recently indicated that the only way *Conan 3* will ever get made is if Oliver Stone and John Milius are involved. With Stone toying with his third Vietnam film and a movie

version of *Evita*, it looks as if he won't be available. As for Milius, he is up to his eyes in his version of the story of the Red Indian chief Geronimo.

Sylvester Stallone has walked out from the film *Dead Reckoning*. It would have been his second venture into genre movies (his first being *Paul Bartel's Death Race 2000*) but for some reason he developed cold feet. Perhaps the plot, which featured Stallone as a cop hunting down an alien life form on a train did not inspire him.

Watch out for *Coronation Street*'s Brian Tilsley in *RoboCop 2*. Remember the female newsreader in the original *RoboCop*? Well, she went on to become Mrs Chris Quinton, and led our Brian out to the US to seek his fortune, commencing with a role in *RoboCop 2* as an inquiring reporter.

Cold feet? Stallone in his Rambo days (left). Strong arm: Schwarzenegger calls the shots for *Terminator 2* (below)



THE WORLD OF FEAR

A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

Not for the first time, a David Lynch film is causing migraines at the MPAA. *Wild At Heart*, his new nightmarish love story, has been awarded an X rating in the States, reputedly because of 'extreme violence', and its scheduled summer release in the UK is likely to be postponed. William Morton looks at the latest from the bad boy of modern American cinema

Back in the Forties, a style of filmmaking became known as *film noir*, which generally signified a crime/thriller — all dark alleys, seedy characters, dames and hard-boiled detectives being pursued by small time crooks at night along rainy streets. By the Sixties the genre had died out, but in his own perverse way American director David Lynch has taken up the mantle of the *film noir*, in so far as he explores the underbelly of society in small town America, depicting ordinary disadvantaged people generally on the wrong side of the law, invariably into violence, sex and drugs.

Lynch is arguably the most exciting young director to emerge from America in recent years and his fifth feature film, *Wild At Heart* was given the accolade of the top prize, the Palme d'Or, at Cannes this year.

David K Lynch comes from Missoula, Montana, and it was whilst he was studying at the Pennsylvania Academy that he made his first film, an untitled one-minute animated short. A millionaire gave him some money to make his next, *The Alphabet* (1965), which Lynch himself described as 'a little nightmare about the fear connected with learning'. He then received an

independent filmmakers' grant from the American Film Institute to make *The Grandmother* (1970), a 34-minute live action/animated featurette which won prizes at number of international festivals. Lynch then embarked on his first feature film, the astonishing *Eraserhead*, again with the help of the AFI. (He was later told by the then head of the AFI, the famous film director George Stevens, that they put films into categories when considering them, but when they got through categorising they found that *Eraserhead* was in a category all by itself!)

Eraserhead was shot by a small group of six people every night for a year! This surrealistic horror story rooted in an ordinary life situation was to set the tone for most of Lynch's subsequent work. *The Elephant Man* followed, and it is easy to see why this subject attracted Lynch, for the freak or social outcast has remained central to his work. With *Dune*, it could be said that he took on more than he could manage, especially in working for a major studio, but *Blue Velvet*, his controversial exploration of sadomasochism and voyeurism, brought him back to earth in more senses than one.

OUT TO LYNCH

In April 1989, author Barry Gifford gave film producer Monty Montgomery, who owned the

rights to some works published by Gifford's company, the manuscript of his new unpublished novel *Wild At Heart: The Story Of Lula And Sailor*. Montgomery optioned the story the next day and sent it to Lynch, who loved it and wrote the first draft of the screenplay in six days. By August, the film had gone into production with the cast almost choosing itself: Laura Dern (Lula) and Isabella Rossellini (Perdita Durango) had both worked on *Blue Velvet*, and Nicholas Cage's over the top performances were just what the role of Sailor demanded; Laura Dern's real life mother Diane Ladd takes the role of Lula's mother Marietta, and the menacing Bobby Peru provides Willem Dafoe with a marvellous chance to personify oily evil. Isabella Rossellini (Lynch's real life lover) sums up the characters in the film: 'They are the kind of strange souls that are more real in our dreams or nightmares than in reality, they are people that one just imagines are out there but hasn't encountered before.'

The story line has a Bonnie and Clyde couple, Sailor and Lula on the run in the Deep South, where they encounter a maze of twisted and frightening events and people. The movie opens brutally, with Sailor and Lula leaving a dance hall where Sailor has just been propositioned by Lula's mother; when he rejects her, she



David Lynch (above); Lula Pace Fortune (Laura Dern, below)

sends a guy to kill him, but Sailor, never one to shrink from a challenge, cracks open his assailant's head.

Lula has to wait two years for Sailor to come out of the 'Pen', during which time she is berated by Marietta never to see him again. When Marietta learns that her daughter has taken off with Sailor, now a parole breaker to boot, she sets first an old boyfriend detective Johnnie Farragut (Harry Dean Stanton) on their tail, and then, double-crossing him, calls up another ex-lover, mobster Marcello Santos (J E Freeman) for help.

There is a sense of danger and



excitement, mixed with perversity and terror, in almost every scene of the film; you can never relax, for you never know where Lynch is going to take you next. Characters do the unexpected, and almost every character in *Wild At Heart* is kinky, crazy or just plain weird. An extraordinary mixture, the film is a road movie, with Sailor and Lula driving through Texas to escape Lula's half-crazed, jealous mother; it's a love story (but decidedly not *Love Story*) for Sailor and Lula are generally dancing or making love in hot, dirty and dangerous places; and it's a fantasy, having deliberate parallels with *The Wizard Of Oz*, with a Wicked Witch and a Good Fairy playing roles in the fates of Sailor and Lula. But overall, it's one of the most dangerous films to come out of America for some time, with a sense of terror and tension which runs through the thoughts and deeds of the characters, most of whom are hardly in control of their actions.

SEXUAL MENACE

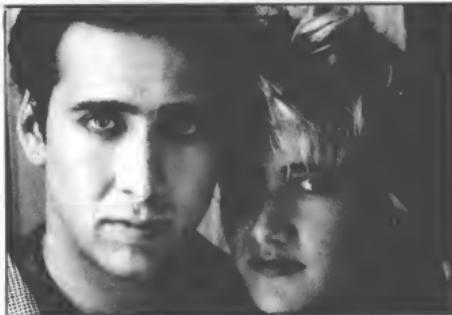
In *Blue Velvet* Lynch uncovered the evil that lies just below the surface of small town America and created a disturbingly malevolent character in the shape of Frank Booth (an unforgettable performance from Dennis Hopper); in *Wild At Heart* we encounter a number of purveyors of evil — an eccentric hoodlum, Mr Reindeer, a psychotic killer, Reginald Sula with his sidekick Droy Shadow, and Reggie's weird girlfriend Juana — who all enjoy perverse sex and killing. But they are topped for sexual menace by Bobby Peru, the 'black angel', a character without conscience or scruples. Although apparently a friend of Sailor's, he does not hesitate to take pleasure out of sexually humiliating Lula in a powerfully shocking scene.

Unlike most contemporary films dealing in terror or horror, *Wild At Heart* does not employ special effects to make its case, but it is somehow much more disturbing and powerful because we feel for the characters, we are somehow squeezed inside their skulls. Thus, when Peru and Sailor embark on a bank robbery, the violence that erupts is all the more shocking for being unexpected and realistic; a night-time drive suddenly shifts into another gear when Sailor and Lula come upon a bloody and increasingly nightmarish road accident; and, more bizarrely, minor characters crop up, like Sailor's cousin Dell, who is psychotically fixated on Christmas and fond of putting cockroaches in his underwear!

Let's just hope that Lynch's preferred version of *Wild At Heart*



makes it past the British censors soon; but until that happens we may have to be content with the screening of his groundbreaking TV series *Twin Peaks*, which will take place this autumn.



Lula's obsessive mother, Marietta (above) played by Laura Dern's real life ma, Diane Ladd; lovers Sailor (Nicholas Cage) and Lula (right); Sailor with the 'black angel', Bobby Peru (Willem Dafoe, below)



SNIP! SNIP!

● The UK Comic Art Awards include: **Grant Morrison** (Best Writer); **Simon Bisley** (Best Artist, pencil or ink); **Peter Bagge** (Best Writer/Artist); **Paul Gravett** (Best Auxiliary Contributor, letterer, colourist, editor, other); and **D C Comics** (Best Publisher.) Congrats to all.

● Terry Pratchett's new book, *Eric* is published by Gollancz this month. What makes it so special is that artist **Josh Kirby** has created 15 colour illustrations for the humorous fantasy novel.

● Former Home Secretary, the Right Honourable **Marilyn Rees** PC MP, has been appointed President of the Video Standards Council, the body which intends to make 18-certified videos more difficult to obtain.

● UFO-addicts may be interested to learn of the UFO line which provides constantly updated info on sightings in Britain and overseas as well as the gen on publications, meetings, lectures and conferences. Be friendly with our outer space friends, phone 0898 654 637.

● *Carancula*, a 20 minute horror movie directed by **Mariano Balino**, starts shooting on 4 August in Stamford, before transferring to the Curzon Mayfair for further filming. A 16mm colour short, the film is described by producer Bob Portal as 'a macabre fairy tale, which plays around with genre conventions whilst retaining a serious approach to its subject', and its title translates from the Latin as 'a small piece of meat' (very Dario Argento...). Aimed at worldwide TV sales, the film will be shot without dialogue. Jonathan Jaynes (best known by *Coronation Street* fans as the man who mugged *Hilda Ogden* in an episode of the Granada soap) is to star as the central character — a crazed killer.

WINNING STREAK

Stephen Jones, joint recipient of the illustrious Bram Stoker Award, outlines the punishing schedule of quaffing champagne and hobnobbing with horror luminaries at this year's ceremony.

We're popping over to Providence, Rhode Island, just for a couple of days,' Kim Newman and I gleefully informed our London friends and acquaintances. It impressed the hell out of them.

The reason we were taking this expensive jaunt over the weekend of June 22-24 was because our non-fiction anthology, *Horror: 100 Best Books*, had finally been nominated for something: a Bram Stoker Award at the third Horror Writers Of America business meeting, and irrepressible organiser Charlie Grant had invited us to attend.

However, after nine hours flying across the Atlantic, three hours sitting around JFK airport, and an hour to Providence in a two-prop plane that looked as if it was held together with string and wishful thinking, we were beginning to think it might not have been such a good idea after all.

We arrived on Friday evening, just in time to drop our bags off in our rooms and head up to the HWA suite for a welcome-to-

Providence reception hosted by Berkley Books' Ginger Buchanan, who was showing off her beautifully packaged Charter line of horror novels.

Apparently we had missed an earlier trip to Lovecraft's grave, where HWA President Chelsea Quinn Yarbro and assembled audience toasted HPL with champagne (shouldn't that have been ice-cream?). Goodness knows what the Old Gent of Providence would have made of it all, but it looked pretty odd when we caught it on the local television news later that night.

You wouldn't believe what jet-



Kim Newman

lag, unlimited shots of bourbon and staying up until four in the morning will do to your head...

world anthologies, and wouldn't it be a good idea if they cut all the bitching letters out of the HWA journal *Transfusions*?). Instead, we tried to pour as much coffee as we could down our throats without drowning to kill the throbbing hangovers before our afternoon talk about British publishing.

We had an attentive, if somewhat reserved, audience, and somehow mumbled through an hour explaining the differences between UK and US publishers.

Noticeably more people turned up to listen to a heavyweight panel of editors from Berkley, Dell, Pocket, NAL, Tor etc discuss horror publishing, while we disappeared for a much-needed lunch. We were out scouring the book stores (of which there are precious few in downtown Providence) while a panel tried to answer the somewhat obvious question 'Why write short stories if novels pay better?'

However, we were back in plen-



Stephen Jones

ty of time for the cash bar before moving on to the evening's highlight, the 1990 Bram Stoker Awards Banquet. After we'd lined our stomachs with what appeared to be several pounds of beef dinner, toastmaster Chet Williamson gave an amusing introduction (and a not-so-subtle dig at the worth of the Stoker Awards) to the evening's distinguished guest speaker, Robert Bloch. It perhaps

PRIME EVIL JUDGEMENT

The FEAR/Transworld Prime Evil Short Story competition, launched last year to coincide with the publication of **Douglas E Winter**'s horror anthology, has been won by **Stephen Matthews** of Diss in Norfolk with a chilling called *Breaking Up*.

The runners up are **James Lovegrove** from South London, with a story called *Satisfaction Guaranteed* and **A J Wilson** of Edinburgh, with a story called *When The Gardens Bloom At Night*.

They all win copies of a

beautifully bound and cased limited edition of *Prime Evil*, signed by the likes of **Stephen King**, **Clive Barker**, **Peter Straub** and **David Morrell** — some prize!

FEAR editor John Gilbert who, with Transworld Advertising and Sales Promotion Director **Larry Finlay**, was on the panel of judges, expressed his appreciation of both the winners and the publishers who all ensured the continued promotion of the short story form. 'The results are staggering. We had nearly 500 entries in all and many of those were good. The reading of

the stories took much longer than we anticipated. The standard was very high, so we might print all three winning entries instead of just the first one. I must thank all those at Transworld who helped organise the project, especially Larry Finlay, Douglas E Winter who started it all with his horror anthology, and the entrants, who have been so patient.'

Commissioners to all those who didn't win but, who knows, we might just do it again one day — in a few millennia'.

THE WORLD OF FEAR

wasn't the best speech I've heard the veteran author give, but it passed an entertaining half hour and delighted his hundred or so listeners.

Then it was time for the Awards, each an intricately designed haunted house sculpture with the winner's name engraved behind a movable front door: Non-Fiction was a tie between Harlan Ellison's *Watching* (collected by Tom Monteleone, who played a cassette message from Ellison,

apologising for not being there in person) and *Horror: 100 Best Books*, edited by you-know-who. Robert Bloch accepted the Collection award on behalf of Richard Matheson for his *Collected Stories*, and Rick McCammon was on hand to pick up Short Story for 'Eat Me' from *Book Of The Dead*. Nancy Collins collected the Novelette award on behalf of Joe R Lansdale for 'On The Far Side Of The Cadillac Desert With Dead Folks' (also

from *Book Of The Dead*), and then was back up on the stage again to accept First Novel for her book *Sunglasses After Dark*. It was then the turn of Dan Simmons to pick up the award in the Novel category for his mammoth opus *Carrie*. Comfort, and Robert Bloch received a standing ovation as he accepted the HWA's Life Achievement Award.

Then it was off to the HWA suite to partake of much champagne until the early hours of the morning, courtesy of Tom Doherty and Tor Books.

After repeating the previous day's ritual of gallons of coffee, Kim and I had time to take a walk up to Brown University and purchase paperback copies of our award-winning book which we'd never seen before. This was followed by hurried goodbyes, a repeat of Friday's travel arrangements — this time in reverse — and we were back in London on Monday morning.

Some people didn't even know we'd been away...

together just one more such gothic movie, a version of *The Raven*, starring Donald Pleasence. He sees these movies as light satires of the horror industry. 'It's kids who go to these movies and they like a bit of blood, they like to go and see Friday The 13th, but they're laughing at it. I don't think they're taking it seriously, so I don't think we can play it straight. Yes, we bring out the old timers — these movies are like Friday The 13th with Christopher Lee — but you can't take them seriously because they're like yesterday's news.'

Strong words indeed, but Towers seems to have a nose for up and coming genres. His next project, for Harmony Gold, involves Christopher Lee, and is called *Sherlock Holmes: The Golden Years*. It comprises two major television mini-series taking eight weeks to film. 'It covers the years when Sherlock Holmes got a little over the top, when he travelled the world, met Emperor Franz Joseph and became a man of some repute.'



LOST BOYS DIRECTOR NEAR DEATH

Lost Boys director Joel Schumacher is back in the saddle with *Flatliners*, a story of five medical students still wet behind the ears who are about to confront every doctor's dilemma — death!

Starring Kiefer Sutherland — who also appeared in Lost Boys — Kevin Bacon — lately in Tremors — William Baldwin, Oliver Platt and Julia Roberts, the movie reverses the Frankenstein mindset with the students shutting down each others' hearts in order to temporarily experience the effects of the hereafter. They encounter a succession of 'ghosts', people they have wronged who force them to look at their own somewhat twisted moralities, and have to face up to these minor, though unsettling, sins.

The film is the first in a three picture deal between Columbia and the Stonebridge production company recently set up by



Kevin Bacon

Michael (Black Rain) Douglas and Rick Bieker. Schumacher, who has made his mark on the movie industry with The Incredibly Shrinking Woman, St Elmo's Fire and Cousins, is keen to stress that *Flatliners* has little to do with the gaucho teen-vampire comedy, *Lost Boys* that he directed three years ago. Certainly, the imagery is more complex, the subject matter very emotive and fantastic. What's more, it does not take place in the Domestos-drenched corridors of a hospital but in the fluorescent-lit palaces of the mind. Strong stuff, but will it be as successful as *Lost Boys*? We'll have more news in the near future.

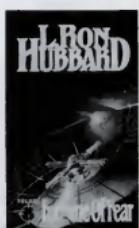
FREDDY IS DEAD — LONG LIVE ERIK!

Robert Englund's reign as Freddy Krueger may soon be over, but his run as the Phantom of the Opera could be equally as long, according to the first movie's producer, Harry Alan Towers. Robert Englund is the closest thing to a contemporary Bela Lugosi or Boris Karloff. He's looking for another home with a horror villain as the hero. Robert is a good actor. I told him to get out of this Freddy hit and he is a character of some depth.

The film is all ready to go, probably at the end of the year, but I don't think we're going to call it *Phantom In America* [as previously reported in some movie magazines], but *Phantom 2* sounds right.'

Towers is also responsible for the 21st Century Poe adaptations, *Masque Of The Red Death* and *The House Of Usher*, and plans to put

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NEW ERA

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YES, HONESTLY!

It's a terrifying experience for some people — walking into a shop, pretending to scan the shelves long after you've located the magazine you want and, perhaps, picking up a newspaper before dropping your purchases on the checkout counter. The cashier may ask if you want a bag, you might accept and, despite the urge to open your package in view of other passengers on the bus, manners dictate that you wait until you reach the safety of your own living room.

It might sound as if you have just bought a copy of *Playboy* — or girl! — but, in fact, several of our more sensitive readers buy **FEAR** in this fashion each month. Quite what they imagine the shopkeeper, and others witnessing their strange behaviour believe, I don't know but, like many people I've encountered during my services to the horror industry, they're either ashamed to be counted among its devotees or dismissive of the area as an irrelevance.

Last month I counted film critic Barry Norman as one of their number, and I'll give some more unsettling examples before this column is through. But first I have to say that there are people who I wouldn't normally associate with the macabre who have recently declared an interest in the subject.

Julian Lloyd Webber, for instance: as a fan of classical music, I've watched and listened to this cellist perform dozens of times, read about his family and his brilliant academic background, seen his brother's musicals... But I never considered that, just as I have an interest in his profession, he might have an interest in mine.

Shortly, Webber will have published an anthology of horror stories entitled *Short Sharp Shocks*, within which he boldly declares his admiration for the likes of Arthur Machen and the *Pan Book Of Horror Stories*. He even reads and enjoys *FEAR* regularly — and what a smile that brought to my lips!

Unfortunately, his honest attitude towards the fantastical genres is not commonly shared by others, who often relegate fantasy to the area of sub-humanity. Recently I requested an interview

with a very famous science fiction writer. The response from the publicity people, who shape his every move, was less than enthusiastic. They perceived us, in this instance, as a horror mag, a dog turd — sunny side up but, nevertheless, excrement. And that, despite our track record of interviews with Ray Bradbury, J G Ballard, Raymond Feist, Harlan Ellison and, in the near future, Asimov, Silverberg, Gibson and Moorcock. Indeed, one of those gentlemen, who was at first declined to appear in our pages, later agreed to, saying that he was surprised that we were such an intelligent read.

Our difficulties don't, however, rest solely with those outside our genre looking in. During the past two years we have interviewed almost every major horror author, save one. Stephen King, who has become so withdrawn from the media that some readers suspect he no longer exists (see **FEAR FORUM** this month, for proof that he does...)



mind if we pay huge amounts of money to obtain movie publicity stills from the States in order to run five page features on their projects. Some realise that we do sell tickets and influence a substantial proportion of the genre video audience — a provable fact — so perhaps the others ought to reflect that a large number of video releases are horror or fantas-

were not deemed to be suitable — could it be because of our genre? Yet I suspect that many of the people who behave so snootily towards us must, secretly, have an interest in the product they are promoting!

All this angst puts me in a quandary. We are well represented by magazine distributors in this country and we achieve encouragingly large sales for a genre title. Last week I found myself wondering whether we shouldn't start playing the selection game ourselves. If companies can't be bothered to send us material, we can easily drop that five page feature on their film or author. It's an interesting idea, and one that will no doubt keep returning to me as long as distributors and publishers are so obstructive. But, of course, the readers — people like Julian Lloyd Webber and my bank manager — always win the day in my thoughts, and I know that it is **FEAR's** duty to report on the whole genre where possible. We shall, of course, continue to do so, despite all turn-offs by those who deem themselves more refined than us. But I can at least keep an eye on the dross that those same publicists are keen to foist upon us because nobody else will take it. Perhaps a more helpful attitude will follow amongst those who want our interest in those matters, but are not willing to return the favour.



Julian Lloyd Webber: short, sharp and shocking

As another example, one famous genre film star who has since passed into the mainstream declined to be interviewed for a special feature because he believed we might make a joke out of a subject he still holds very dear. Was our Hammer feature a joke?

Most serious, however, is the attitude of some of the larger British film distributors, many of whom 'forget' to send us invites to press previews, but who don't

say oriented, and that whether they like it or not we now draw and influence that prime audience.

Recently, we attempted to get onto the movie preview lists via another route: through a group called the Society Of Film Distributors. This body supplies lists of film screening dates to journalists, magazines and the media in general, but its board decides just who should receive their mailings. Unfortunately, we

John Gilbert

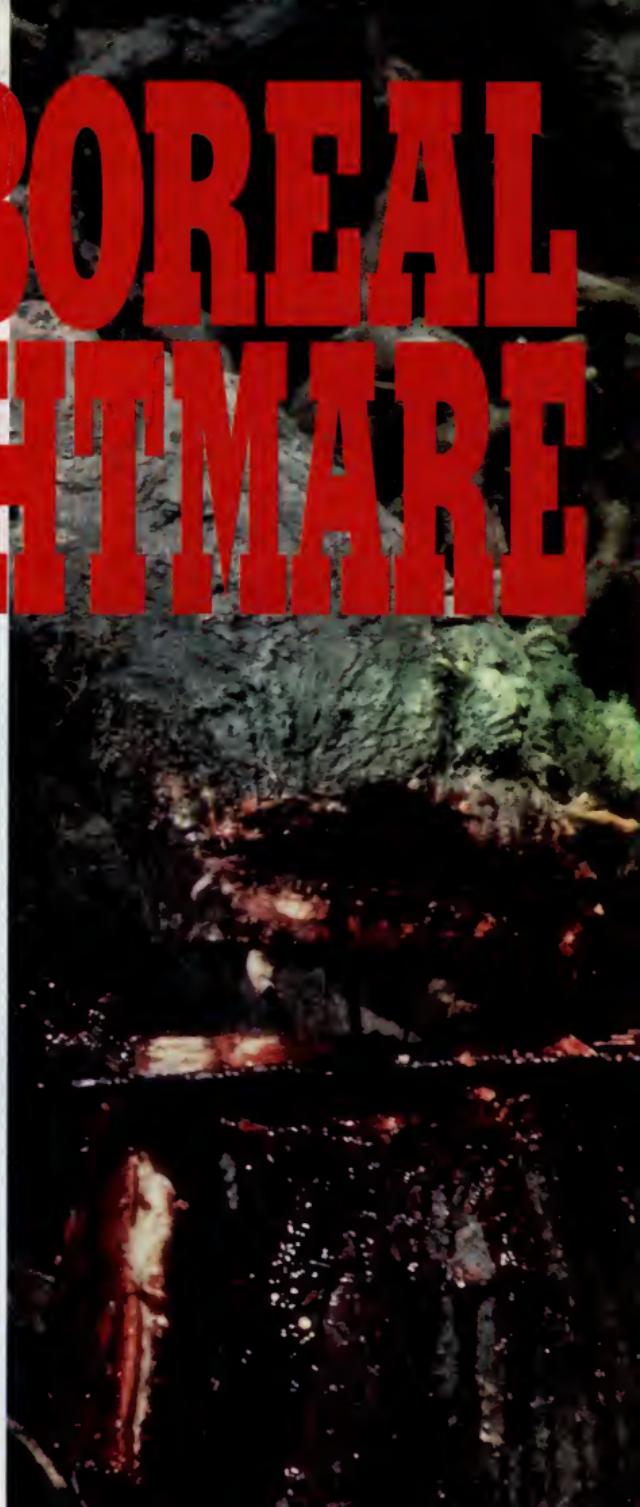
ARBOREAL NIGHTMARE

William Friedkin,
celebrated director of *The*
***Exorcist*, talks to Steve**
Biodrowski about his new
film, *The Guardian*, which
heralds his long —
anticipated return to the
horror genre.

The *Guardian* deals with a very contemporary idea for a horror film, in that it's currently more common for both parents to work, hence the necessity to hire a stranger to care for the children.

WF: When I grew up, your father worked and your mother didn't. The world has changed, especially in this country [the USA]. Today, women work. And that very often means a person who is really a total stranger comes in to stay with the kids. That's a situation fraught with opportunities for suspense. That's a good, realistic premise for a horror film.

That's what I thought when it came to me. The reason to make a film like that, with a supernatural bent, is that if you did it realis-





Blood spurts from the tree as
Phil (Dwier Brown) saws off
a massive branch

tically, it would be too much of a turn off. I think there has to be a *distance*, which is what the Brothers Grimm had in their stories of children being devoured in the woods: they were devoured by witches and such — not by Richard Ramirez [the convicted serial murderer popularly known as The Night Stalker] or some madman. The supernatural stood in for the reality and provided a kind of artistic distance, which I think is necessary in these very primal studies in fear and hysteria.

The supernatural embodies our paranoid fears?

Exactly, but with a distance that makes the story not only palatable but gives it reverberations. That's why the Brothers Grimm stuff has lasted. Everyone knows who these witches are standing in for — they're personifying evil. But if it was Richard Ramirez, it would be unbearable, as it is in reading about it in the newspaper.

Do you usually work on the screenplay yourself? You take co-credit on this one with Stephen Volk.

I've worked on all the scripts of all the films I've made, to one extent or another. I did so much work on this one that it seemed ridiculous not to take the credit. The writer got ill at a certain point and had to go back to England. He did a good job; he would have seen it through.

MYSTERY OF FAITH

So do you see working on the script as part of your job as director?

I think so. Sometimes I've written them from scratch. I even worked on the script of *The Exorcist* with Blatty for about six months.

Is it true that you went through the novel, marking off passages you wanted him to use in the screenplay?

Yeah, I still have that copy. He had written a script, and I thought it was terrible — but I loved the novel. So I gave him a copy of the

'Billy Wilder once said something about a film I made, *The French Connection*, and it has become a guiding principle of mine. He said that that particular film is constantly on the move. Even when it is standing still, it's moving'. And that is what we're dealing with - motion pictures. We're not photographing a play'

novel with all the passages underlined that I felt we should use in the film, including dialogue. He said: 'You actually want to make a film of the book? I never thought that would happen!' In those days I think there was an assumption that a controversial book would be bought for a film, but not really made — you'd use the title and do something else. The Warner Brothers people actually wanted to



change the locale to Salem, Massachusetts; they had a lot of insane ideas.

You don't consider *The Exorcist* to be a horror film?

I never considered it a part of the horror film

A mysterious tree shadow is cast over Phil as he works

HURRICANE BILLY

Mark Kermode examines the tempestuous career of moviemaker William Friedkin.

Although *The Guardian* has been widely touted as William Friedkin's first horror outing since *The Exorcist*, Friedkin has not entirely ignored the genre in which he made his mark. In 1985, he directed a 20-minute episode of *The Twilight Zone*, entitled 'Nightcrawlers', which melds nightmarish, gothic visuals with a compelling storyline concerning supernatural combat shock. That the director of *The Exorcist* should be able so efficiently to conjure a disturbing vision is hardly surprising — what is surprising is that a director who, only seven years previously, commanded multimillion dollar budgets and creative *carte blanche* should be reduced to making TV shorts at all.

Yet Friedkin's career has been nothing if not changeable, spanning documentary, comedy, horror and thrillers, producing results which have ranged from total successes to extravagant disasters. It is indeed notable that since winning the Best Director Oscar for *The French Connection* (1971) and earning an Academy nomination for *The Exorcist* (1973), Friedkin's output has consisted in the main of belching failures marked by infuriatingly occasional flashes of brilliance — the broken bridge scene in *Sorcerer*; the bar-room scene in *Cruising*; and the chase scenes in *To Live And Die In LA* in which Chance and Yukovitch escape armed gunmen by ploughing the wrong way up the Long Beach Freeway...

If one factor has remained unchanged in the best of Friedkin's work, it is the ruthless subjugation of character development to plot, a technique which he desires to be his golden rule and which has underwritten the success of both *The Exorcist* and *The French Connection*. Just as lengthily shot 'character development' scenes (including some depicting SM fetishism) were excised from *The French Connection*, Friedkin's dismemberment of Blatty's quasi-religious tract resulted in all the 'up-front' theological messages ending up on the cutting room floor, including a sequence considered essential by Blatty in which Father Merrin discusses



Linda Blair in *The Exorcist*

the nature and purpose of possession. 'In editing *The Exorcist* every attempt has been made to underplay the metaphysics and play up the horror,' admitted Friedkin in autumn 1973, infuriating Blatty who had ironically been so impressed by the economic style and relentless pace of *The French Connection*, and who claimed: 'My major contribution to *The Exorcist*, as producer, was my insistence that Billy Friedkin be the director.'

PRISON BEATINGS

Blatty had, in fact, first met Friedkin in 1966, when the latter had derided Blatty's work on Blakes Edwards' *Gunn* script, calling it 'the worst piece of shit I've ever read in my life.' Despite Edwards' chagrin, Blatty was mightily impressed by the young director's outspokenness. 'He stuck to his guns,' said Blatty, 'and I never forgot that.'

Also central to Blatty's admiration was Friedkin's much vaunted and oft cited 'documentary realism', which the author had witnessed

genre, although I can understand why most people do — I don't really argue the point. I never set out to make a horror film; I set out to make a film about the mystery of faith, which involved a highly intense dramatic situation.

Then it wouldn't make sense to ask why you're directing 'another' horror film — if in fact you consider *The Guardian* to be a horror film?

The Guardian is probably more likely to be classified in that genre, and I admire those films that have successfully transcended the genre, like *Rosemary's Baby*, *Alien*, *Psycho* and *Diabolique*. But others, like *A Nightmare On Elm Street* and all that — those I consider more satires. This is a film that hopes to transcend the genre.

Transcend in what way?

It's a serious film, for one thing. *The Guardian* is real people in real situations that later turns toward magic realism.

Then, like *The Exorcist*, *The Guardian* starts off with a realistic tone; but with

elements like an animated tree, you get into surrealism, don't you?

That comes under the head of 'magic realism'. I think everyone has these things in their lives: strange, mysterious occurrences that you can't explain and are extremely disturbing.

So the audience is supposed to relate to the events in the film in that way?

No, I never try to tell the audience how to relate to anything. There's the film: no explanation, no subtext, no 'this is what it means'. I wouldn't want to get into that, telling the audience how they're supposed to take it.

A LITTLE VIOLENT

I was wondering if there might be an extra challenge in selling the fantasy element to the audience.

I don't think so. I mean, fantasy movies are the most popular movies of all time: *ET*, *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones*. Nobody ever goes to a movie saying, 'This is life exactly as it's lived.' Movies thrive on fantasy.

Still, technically, you have certain tasks in front of you that you wouldn't have if filming a straight drama. For instance, the sequence wherein the tree kills three thugs who attack the nanny, impaling one with a root, devouring another and crushing the head of the last one.

That's one very small part of the picture; that's in the film probably less than three minutes. There's a couple of sequences that are a little violent, but they're on screen very briefly.

Then the main body of the film is oriented toward mystery?

Yeah, I would say suspense. Believe me, this is not a film about shock effects or gruesome images.

At the time of its release, *The Exorcist* was a groundbreaking in terms of audience impact and was considered, perhaps unfairly, to be very violent.

It really isn't, but there's a tremendous intensity behind it, and also it gets into people's belief, people's faith. I think it had greater



Al Pacino in the controversial *Cruising*

throughout *The French Connection* and now craved for his own movie. Friedkin began his directing career producing television documentaries, the most significant of which, *The People Versus Paul Crump* (1962) has been cited as instrumental in the last minute conversion of Crump's sentence from execution to life imprisonment (although ironically Crump has subsequently confessed his guilt, a confession which Friedkin repudiates), and gained Friedkin a reputation as an extraordinarily 'dramatic' documentarian — in fact, Friedkin's 'documentaries', with their intensive use of abstract imagery, are in many ways best described as melodramas. Eschewing mere interview footage and factual reporting, Friedkin presented impressionistically restaged prison beatings, and even resorted to belting Crump in order to get him to cry on camera — a technique later repeated when Friedkin thumped Father Dyer (played by the Reverend William O'Malley) in order to attain the necessary tears during Karrafa's death scene in *The Exorcist*. Indeed, it was the overtly dramatic style of the Paul Crump documentary which so impressed TV producer Norman Lloyd

that he enlisted Friedkin to direct an episode of the flagging *Hitchcock's Half Hour* TV series in 1965; entitled 'Off Season', and dealing with mistaken identity and contorted *crimes passionnels*, the 30-minute segment failed to save the show from axing, despite a lively and inventive script by stalwart writer Robert Bloch.

GAY WRATH

Friedkin's eventual move into motion pictures was an ignominious affair, commencing with *Good Times* (1965), a limp Sonny and Cher vehicle, and *The Night They Raided Minsky's* (1968), a \$5 million flop starring Britt Ekland, Jason Robards and the effervescent Norman Wisdom. It was not until after his effective but little seen screen adaptation of Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party* (1968) that Friedkin's moviemaking was to inspire any real media or public attention: *The Boys In The Band* (1970), based on Mart Crowley's stage play, provoked a storm of controversy, sparking an angry reaction from the gay community who charged Friedkin with voyeuristic homophobia. Ten years later, that anger was to be repeated when Friedkin

directed *Cruising* (1980), novelist Gerald Walker's tale of a young undercover cop's descent into the caricatured Hadean world of the gay heavy leather/SM scene. Directed by Village Voice columnist Arthur Bell as 'the most bigoted look at homosexuality ever presented on the screen', *Cruising* also incurred the wrath of the MPAA who demanded cuts in order to avoid an X rating. Despite a recalcitrant opening disclaimer, the movie was picketed throughout England and America (although true to form, the public flocked in to see what all the fuss was about — *Cruising* broke the box office record at the London Pavilion, and took £30,358 in its first week in Britain).

The financial success of *Cruising*, however, did little to mask the decline into which Friedkin's career was rapidly nose-diving. He had followed *The Exorcist* with an arrogantly overblown remake of Georges Clouzot's classic thriller *The Wages Of Fear* entitled (bafflingly) *Sorcerer* (1977), which at \$22 million earned itself the label of the first 'unglossified, commercial disaster' of the 'New Hollywood'. Whilst his next picture *The Brink's Job* (1978) cost less, it fared no better at the box office — nor indeed did *Deal Of The Century* (1983), a second rate, *Dr Strangelove*-esque black comedy about the arms race, starring Chevy Chase.

It was not until 1987, two years after the higher profile release of *To Live And Die In LA*, that Friedkin's eminent ability was to become evident once more, in the shape of *Rampage*, a restrictively budgeted psycho-drama shot in 36 days, concerning the lassitude — or otherwise — of serial killer Charles Reece, played with aplomb by Alex MacCartur. Beginning with a series of vicious slayings, the movie is not a whodunit, but a *whydun*, which pessimistically ponders the legal definition of sanity and the veracity of capital punishment. Like *Henry: Portrait Of A Serial Killer*, *Rampage* sustains its horrific momentum by constantly suggesting that Reece is not the deranged psyche we would like him to be. Ironically, the movie finds Friedkin, 25 years after dramatically pleading for Paul Crump's life, now resolutely ambiguous on the question of the death sentence. Perversely, however, *Rampage* found itself embroiled in the collapse of the De Laurentiis Entertainment Group, and despite a limited European theatrical and video release, remains largely unseen.

'You know what it's going to say on my tombstone?' quotes Nat Segoian of an embittered Friedkin in his excellent biography *Hurricane Billy*. 'It's going to say "The man who directed *The Exorcist*..."' For the time being, that still seems true.



The ancient tree (above) sustains itself by luring babies — and sometimes even men — into its fold; Friedkin directs Jenny Seagrove

impact than was actually intended. Certainly everything we attempted worked. It affected people very deeply, deeper than I thought it would.

I take it *The Guardian* will be working on a similar level?

I don't want to say that. Before the film comes out, I don't want to tell the audience what to expect from it. But from your standpoint, what to expect is the same intensity of approach that *The Exorcist* had — a seriousness of approach. When I make a film, I take it seriously. It's not a send-up of the genre or a satire.

POP STORYTELLING

Fairy tales, like the Brothers Grimm stories, have a sort of mythology, in the sense that Good and Evil are clearly defined. Is that the approach you're taking in this film?

I think Good and Evil are clearly defined, yeah.

That was the approach in *The Exorcist*, as well. I don't know if that was intentional on your part or if it was because of William Peter Blatty, who comes from a Jesuit background.

All William Peter Blatty was interested in doing was entertaining, and that's all I was interested in doing. Blatty is not a philoso-

pher, he's not an essayist, he is not an ideologue. He is a popular — one might even say 'pop' — novelist. He had but to write a very good, if not excellent, pop novel, which stands on its own and requires no apology, but it is not to be read as a work of theology — by no means — or as a work of philosophy. On that ground, it could be roundly faulted; as a work of entertainment, it stands in my mind as good as anything Edgar Allan Poe ever wrote — which is neither to be read as philosophy or psychology.

As a filmmaker, a storyteller, you're really interested in gripping the audience with the narrative, you're not into analysing your own work.

I would be the last person to have the ability to analyse it. The things that I'm drawn to I'm obviously drawn to because of facets of my character and psyche that I'm not totally familiar with. I think that's true of anyone who's made more than one film. If you look at an overall body of somebody's work and you look at the choices they made — well, there are a lot of reasons for those choices. One of them is: if you're a filmmaker, you want to work as much as you can. If I could find a film in this genre all the time, this is probably all I would do, because I am attracted to this kind of story. There aren't that many good ones, though; there aren't many films that have hit the level I'm after. There's a Japanese film I love, called *Onibaba*, a wonderful film of fantasy and imagination worked very carefully into a fairly realistic story.

GUT FEELING

Is it just a gut feeling that draws you to a particular script?

Yeah, totally, but most of the horror scripts and stories people send me I have no interest in whatsoever. I wouldn't want to film one of the Stephen King books, either — although *It*, I think, is terrific. It's the *Moby Dick* of horror stories. Stephen King is the best of that sort, but there are other, more obscure, names. There's an excellent writer called Dan Simmons, who wrote *The Song Of Kali*, a great work of horror set in modern India.

Once you've selected a script, how do you go about casting?

I just try to cast the roles as I think best, and I don't additionally start thinking of a star. I had worked with Dwier Brown before — he had a small role in *To Live And Die In LA*, and I thought he was marked for greater things. Jenny Seagrove I'd seen in a couple of things and thought she would be absolutely perfect for this. Carrie Lowell was one of





'I don't shy away from the theatre of violence that I myself feel in the world around me, but I hope in my films people will see there is a light, a ray of hope. That although these characters enter into a violent world, a threatening world, they always leave it a better place when they're gone. I think that is the most important thing a filmmaker can leave an audience with — a ray of hope'

A tree root attacks Phil
(above); Jenny Seagrove as
the nanny (below)



about one hundred women we auditioned for her part — she was far and away the best. I had never worked with her before, but I was very impressed with her audition.

How do you direct special effects sequences? Do you use storyboards?

Yeah, but then I don't follow them literally. They're just a guide to the people who construct the effects as to what each particular 'gag', as we call them, will have to accomplish. But I don't even look at the storyboards while I'm filming. I've committed them to memory, and I can improvise on them quite a bit.

So you'd want the same flexibility you'd get when shooting an actor?

That's the ideal. You look at it for believability. You keep doing it again and again. You make modifications and changes until you're convinced — the same as with an actor's performance. And, as with an actor's performance, a certain amount of compromise is involved. Finally, you say, 'That's about as good as it can be.'

Do you ever look back at your old films and see them differently?

Well, you always do. You can never summon the same degree of enthusiasm or passion ten years later. Generally, I would do them differently. Not *The Exorcist* — or *The French Connection* — I can't think of who would be better in the cast or how I could have made it any differently that would have improved upon it. Which isn't to say it isn't flawed, but I don't think I could improve upon it, even with hindsight.

The Guardian, directed by William Friedkin and starring Jenny Seagrove, Dwier Brown and Carrie Lowell, opens in London on August 30.

ZOMBIE HOLOCAUST



Since 1968, when George Romero changed the world by giving us *The Night Of The Living Dead*, zombies have been the spare-part surgeons in hundreds of splatter films. But Tom Savini, FX creator for the original is now directing a remake, and he prefers to think of his new zombies as realistic walking corpses rather than rotting meat mincers. FEAR's David Kuel travelled to Pennsylvania to find out just what else has changed down among the living dead men.





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In the cemetery scene on the first picture we had eight people around. I was in zombie makeup, loading magazines, clapping the clapperstick. I was going to be the cemetery ghoul. But when Bill Hinzman showed up, we said let him do it. That way I could keep loading the magazines. So I spent the rest of the day in zombie makeup behind the camera. This time, however, we're in the cemetery with eighty to a hundred people, a wealth of equipment and crew. And we are spending more in one day on this picture than we spent on the entire one the first time.

The speaker is John Russo, screenwriter of the original *Night Of The Living Dead*. He's talking from a barn — with casts of zombie faces surrounding him — on the set of the 1990 version of the film which he and Russ Streiner (Johnny in the original) are producing from a George Romero script. Tom Savini directs the \$4.2 million 21st Century production which is shooting outside Washington, Pennsylvania and is scheduled for a Halloween release in the United States. The film reunites Russo and Streiner with Romero for the first time since 1972.

Dead heads: zombiefied (left), zombie-stalking with Bill Butler and Tom Towles (below), and the zombie-obsessed director Tom Savini sets up a shot on *The Night Of The Living Dead* — the remake (right)



'It's been fun,' says Russo. 'George is a very warm and gracious and funny person to be around, so getting back together with him has been a real kick. But at the same time this is business, we wanted to get this movie made to save *The Night Of The Living Dead* name. Three years ago, we heard rumours that an outfit in Texas was preparing to remake *NLD*. At that time I was exhausted from battling Hal Roach over the unauthorised colorisation of the original and I was not ready to get into another fight again. So I thought: if we could pull the original group back together — at least get George's consent on the picture — we could make it a go, do our own remake. So I asked George if, even if he wasn't interested in working on it, he would not block it in terms of his rights with the original. And George said not only would he not block the film — he'd love to do it. It wasn't all as easy as one conversation, it took three years to pull ourselves together to make this film. Actually, it was tougher getting this one going than the original.'

KICKING ASS

Russo and Streiner stress that, even though the 1990 version is essentially a remake, the film will be an original story in many ways. 'George has based his script on the 1968 version,' says Streiner, 'but there are a couple of things in it that are new that should surprise people in the theatres. You won't be totally confident about what's going to happen next.'

Though Russo and Streiner are keeping mum about those twists, one of them becomes quite evident when Pat Tallman, who plays Barbara, walks in. She's outfitted in combat boots and an army fatigue jacket, not the costume of the meek little Barbara in the original. 'In the first movie,' recalls Tallman (who starred in Romero's *Knight Riders* and Savini's two installments of *Tales From The Darkside*), 'after the zombies attacked, Barbara was pretty much useless. She was borderline catatonic and ended up getting killed. In this film, however, Barbara goes from being this little convent mouse to quite a tiger. She kills a few zombies using a poker, shotgun, hammer, whatever she can get her hands on.' Tallman looks like she's relishing the thought of being a female Rambo. 'My nickname is Sigourney,' she confesses.

In fact, Barbara comes alive to such an extent that she ends up usurping centre stage from Ben, played by black actor Tony Todd. 'That doesn't bother me,' says Todd between puffs on a cigarette. 'I'm just happy to be in the film. I'm such a fan of the original that when I heard the remake was in the works I went after the role. I was lucky, I was in Pittsburgh at the time doing a film for HBO, so I went to see Savini for the role and I pretty much had the part within a week.'

INTIMIDATION

To prepare for his part, Todd (whose many other roles include a Klingon in the new *Star Trek* series) drove from his home town in Connecticut to Pittsburgh in costume. He said this helped him get the feel for Ben, who is travelling alone at night when the picture begins.

One thing Todd didn't do was see the original film again. He said he didn't want to watch Duane Jones because that might intimidate him. 'Duane did a damn near perfect job, and I didn't want to be too influenced by it.'

In the role of Harry is budding genre star Tom Towles, who played Otis in *Henry: Portrait Of A Serial Killer* (see FEAR issue



'This is not a splatter film... There aren't a lot of on-camera effects... For one thing, we're going for an 'R' rating. And for another, even if we put the effects in, they'd get cut out'

Tom Savini

17). 'Like my role in *Henry*,' says Towles, gnawing on a melon rind between shoots, 'my character here is a major asshole. Harry has a through line based on fear and racism. But I like playing bad guys. It's easy to be a bad guy because, since I've been playing them for a while, it's easy to reach inside myself and find that oblique quality — since it's a part of my nature anyway.' His eyebrows dance on his forehead.

Towles and Todd are running through the motions for a key fight scene to be filmed after the crew breaks for lunch (dinner for most of us, since they're on a noon to mid-

night shooting schedule). The fight is set inside the farmhouse. Ben, whose white dress shirt is spattered with blood, catches Harry, in green suspenders, sneaking the television down into the basement. They scuffle, drop the television, exchange blows and collide with a piano before Ben pins Harry down across a chair in the middle of the room.

Orchestrating the run through ('blocking') is Savini. Dressed in black pants and black leather jacket with a black pony tail trailing down his back, Savini looks more like a slick Euro-terrorist than a horror movie director. This is his first time in the director's

chair and he's quick to point out that 'there is a chair on the set with my name on it!'

MENTAL VORTEX

Savini is utilising his multiple skills (in addition to being a fight director, he was a combat photographer and, of course, a makeup/effects person; he knows so much about so many things that Dario Argento tagged him 'the vortex of the mind') to oversee many aspects of the production. This is his baby.

'When George handed me the script,' says Savini, 'he said: "use the script as a guide, change whatever you like. If you have any questions, I'll answer them honestly, but I'm not going to tell you what to do. This is your movie."

This movie is a classic before we even shoot it. There's a built-in audience for it and I don't mind the fact that we're doing a remake. A while ago someone wrote that Tom Savini was going to direct the ill-advised remake of *The Night Of The Living Dead*. That upset me. Did someone say (about John Carpenter) that the remake of *The Thing* was ill-advised? To me, the remake of *The Thing* was incredibly good. I've got 3,000 videos at my house and it's one of my top ten, right up there with *Blade Runner*, *Ben Hur*, *Barry Lyndon* and others.

I think this film will open a lot of eyes. It's not a remake, so much as a retelling. It is different from the original. There are lots of twists and turns that aren't in the original. And in a way it's almost a sequel: 60 minutes into this film you're getting, in a way, another film. Another thing is it's in colour, though we're toying with the idea of black and white zombie point of view shots that'll add to the suspense in each scene. And that's what this movie is — a suspense movie. This is not a splatter film. Although, with my name and George's on it that's where the attention will be. There aren't a lot of on-camera effects in this movie. For one thing, we're going for an 'R' rating. And for another thing, even if we put the effects in, they'd get cut out, and it'd be like *Texas Chainsaw 2*, a movie without any effects. Also, in most splatter films the characters are lame. You want them to fucking die [laughs]. The *Friday The 13th* movies are full of these mindless twits. In this film we have characters that the audience is going to love and root for.'

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OPTIC NERVES

Another aspect that should set the 1990 version of *The Night Of The Living Dead* apart from other zombie films is the zombie aesthetic. On the set of the film, zombies aren't even called 'zombies'. Savini elaborates: 'I truly believe that zombies aren't scary any more. We've had *The Return Of The Living Dead*, which made a comedy out of them. And then they were put to music in Michael Jackson's *Thriller*. The heavily made-up zombies just aren't scary. So our approach here is much more subtle. When I read the script the word *zombie* was only in it once. I think George was on to something there. These aren't zombies; they're dead persons. I figure they've been dead for three days at the most, and I want them to look that way.'

The zombie look is being handled by the makeup effects team of Everett Burrell and John Vulich, who have both worked for Savini on several pictures including *Day Of The Dead*, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* and *Two Evil Eyes*. Back in the makeup barn Burrell and Vulich, who have teamed up under the name Optic Nerve, are quick to pull out the

snapshots and the anatomy books. 'The look this time is realism,' says twenty-four year old Burrell who with Vulich (twenty-eight) went to an autopsy in Pittsburgh to research that recently dead look. 'You should believe that the zombies in this film are your dead next door neighbours, not monsters from hell, because that's what they are.'

'Another source of information was concentration camp videos,' adds Vulich. 'As distasteful as that sounds, we spent weeks watching them. At that point we'd talked with Tom and decided that the zombie thing had been done into the ground. So we went the opposite way. We wanted to keep our zombies low key and subtle. One of the things we did was play up the nose and ears because when you die your body wastes away, you're emaciated, and your face shrinks in. But your ears and nose stay the same because they're made out of cartilage. It's one of those details I don't think other makeup people have picked up on.'

LOST ANGELS

On a shelf behind them is a collection of tagged Ziploc bags, each with a specific facial appliance. 'There are fifteen to twenty individual zombies in the movie,' says Vulich. 'This is very different from *Day Of The Dead* where most of the zombies were generic.'

The infamous zombie feast from the original is back for another course in the 1990 version. In 1968, Romero (who is not on set because he's busy scripting Stephen King's *The Dark Half*) and company raided a butch-

'It took three years to pull ourselves together to make this film. Actually, it was tougher getting this one going than the original'

John Russo

er's shop for pig guts and such. This time around, however, it's purely plastic. 'We're working on a formula sort of like gummy bears,' says Vulich. 'Gelatin — once you bloody it up — looks pretty good. Besides, the real stuff can get pretty rancid after a while. I can remember on *Day Of The Dead* it got very warm and we were using the real thing...' Vulich wrinkles his nose.

Burrell and Vulich are up and coming makeup stars, and even though the budget of the movie is modest, you get the feeling that everything is being done to give the film that big time look; this also carries over to the casting. For instance, the 1968 cast featured a roster of unknowns. This time, however, genre stars pop up even in the smaller roles.

Bill Moseley (Chop-Top in *Texas Chainsaw 2*, *The First Power*) plays the cemetery zombie, and Bill Butler — who was impaled by Jason in *Friday The 13th Part 7*, cut up by the title characters in *Ghoulies 2* and stalked by Leatherface in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre 3* — is Tom.

'Tom pretty much loses it at one point,' says Butler between bites of lunch. 'He's a Baptist, and to him this is Armageddon. The guy is not too smart. I figure he met his girlfriend Judy in a remedial reading class or something. But it's a much better role than in the first film. Though Tom is kind of a piece of

white trash, he has audience sympathy. Savini calls Tom and Judy "the lost angels amidst all this hell that's come to earth. I got into that."

PERFECTO, SUPERIOR

After lunch, it's back to the farmhouse to film the fight scene between Ben and Harry. It's a handheld camera shot, with Tom and Judy in the background. Savini sits in the kitchen, away from the action, watching the scene unfold on a video monitor. He sips from a bottle of Gatorade and chews gum.

The dialogue for the scene (from Romero's script), rife with expletives and racist comments from Harry, has been pared down. 'For one thing,' says Savini, 'I thought Harry's speech was just too long for the action. And another thing is, we're trying to cut out a lot of the strong language for TV coverage.'

Just then a crew member yells: 'It's Thursday night at the fights, and I've got my money on the Ben guy.' Then it's quiet... and action.

Harry and Ben go at it. Savini shifts in his



chair with each tumble. 'Cut,' he says, sounding mildly satisfied with the take. 'That was perfecto. Now let's go for superio.'

The crew and actors get ready to go again. It's quiet on set, and then assistant director Nick Mastandrea, tongue firmly in cheek, says: 'This is the one scene where they'll sit in the theatre and say —' The crew, in unison, with Savini the loudest: 'HOW DID THEY DO IT?' The set feels like one big party. 'Positive energy,' whispers Streiner.

Then it's take two: Towles and Todd end up huffing and puffing after the fight. 'That was great,' says Savini. 'It couldn't have been better.'

'You should believe that the zombies in this film are your dead next door neighbours, not monsters from hell, because that's what they are'

Everett Burrell

Savini is asked if he's had any trouble on the set. He ponders the question, then says: 'You know, just the other day, I was driving to the set with Nick Mastandrea and I was thinking of all the problems with the shoot. But then all I had to do was think back to twenty-two years ago when I was trying to get a makeup job on the original [he was off to Vietnam before the movie started]. And here I am directing the remake. So, then, I thought that whatever problems come up are inconsequential. I'm happy to be directing this. I'm really lucky. It's gonna be six weeks of hell. But I'm going through with it. And it'll be worth it.'



The boy next door (Walter Berry, above); Pat Tallman as Barbara (below), under — you guessed it — zombie-attack in the cemetery





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hat do you think about all the things written on the back of dust jackets — particularly by Stephen King, who seems to have read everything — and everything is always 'a major work'...?

HE: I don't really think in truth that having any author's blurb on a book does any good. I think having a good-looking cover is infinitely more important. If you could get, you know, Nelson Mandela or Mother Theresa or Gorbachev, or if you can get Jesus Christ to come back from the grave and say 'If I had this book, they wouldn't have nailed me up', then I think it's got some value. Who gives a fuck what Harlan Ellison or Ramsey Campbell or Stephen King or any goddamn body says!

Generally speaking, do you find solicita-

tions asking you to write cover hype intrusive?

What you find is that there is such a drain on your energies that, after a while, you just want to turn off the post office and turn off the phone and be left alone. My desk is stacked high with letters and impositions and things that take time — like interviews.

Whoops!

No, no. Look, I'll be very candid with you. We've been talking here for a while and we may talk for a while longer, and when it's all done, I will have given you what may be one or two new insights or new quotes or something. All I will be saying to you are things that I've said a hundred times to interviewers. I mean, don't you think that every interviewer who has ever known that I ran away at age 13 has asked me about the Kansas City jail? Don't you think that those answers are all pretty much rote by now? Who learns anything from an interview with a writer?

Didn't you ever get curious about writers whom you admired?

No, I was never curious about their personal life. I'll tell you a story. When I was a teenager back in the early Fifties, living in Cleveland, I read in the paper that John Steinbeck was coming to town and he was going to be autographing his new book, which I think was *Travels With Charlie*. I just admired Steinbeck like crazy, and here was this opportunity to meet a man who was, in my view, purely colossal. So I cut school and took the streetcar down to this department store, and I went up to the book department and it was jammed to the walls, and I kind of fought my way through the crowd, and I wound up right next to Steinbeck. I mean, I was standing right next to goddamn John Steinbeck, man! And I was utterly bereft of words. I could barely breathe. But I heard the way people spoke to him — as if he were not a human being but a bronze bust lodged in the



Photo: Peter Cathro

Parthenon on a marble pillar. It was the most astonishing tone of voice.

Twenty years later, here I am at some autograph session in a book store and I'm signing my books and I suddenly realize that people are speaking to *me* in the same way. Well, you cannot imagine... I was frozen. And I said to this person who was speaking to me, I said 'I'm not John Steinbeck' — and he didn't know what the fuck I was talking about!

So I was never curious about that stuff. I think it's a damn shame that people know all about Scott Fitzgerald dancing through the Roaring Twenties and married to this mad woman and drinking himself to death with gin through the jazz age, but nobody reads him. I mean, everybody knows that Hemingway hunted elephants and blew his brain out with a shotgun — but nobody reads him any more.

I think that there are certain people who live their lives at a faster pace in a more com-

DANGEROUS VISIONS

He's a pussycat in a bad-ass zoot suit, an enfant terrible, a 'difficult' writer, and his mouth has made him more enemies than most. For the first time in nearly two decades, the legendary fantasy and science fiction author Harlan Ellison takes time out to give a major interview. Pete Crowther sharpens his pencil and his wits and sallies forth to meet the man 'they' love to hate

mitted fashion. Oliver Wendell Holmes said: 'How dare you sit down to write if you have never stood up to live?' There are certain people who are just inherently more interesting than others. They don't care about security, they don't care about risk, they don't care about the things that sane people worry about. And these people become interesting to us because they take risks, and that's basically all it is. When you get curious about a writer, it's because you want to know how that writer came to be able to take the risk of writing this or that. And what you're really saying is not: what quality does this writer have, but what quality does this writer have that *I myself* should have? And so we get diverted from the real value of what a writer does, which is the writing. I think it was Lautrec who said one should never meet an artist whose work one admires; the artist is always so much less than the work. The best part of you goes into what you put on paper, and what's left over is as good as you can make it. Yes, but what you put on paper is stuff you care about, or you appear to care about. Somebody else will write a story or a novel just because it fulfills a contract... There's a quality to your work that you don't get in most writers' output.

Well, I take that as a high compliment, and I'm pleased to hear it because, yes, I do care about what I write. If I wanted to make money, I would certainly be writing things that were more accessible and didn't bite quite as seriously. But that's the only way I know how to work, that's the only way I know how to write and, because of my background, because of my upbringing, I do care about things.

I guess I have to disagree with you about the concept of the hack writer. No one, I think, ever sets out to write a bad book, even a person who is just doing it for the money. I think everybody goes at it with Balzac called 'clean hands and composure'. I think people really do want to write the best they can, the problem is the degree of ability.

However, I do believe that bad writing diminishes people's ability to read good writing. It corrupts in the same way that television corrupts, but I don't think in their hearts when they sit down, they're saying 'Okay, boy I'm going to make a lot of money on this'. I think everybody sits down and says 'I'm going to write a terrific book'. It's just that a lot of people are not up to it. And there's an incredible amount of self-censoring that writers do. It's never talked about, because most of it is unconscious. This is one of the reasons I write introductions to things and why I write a very personal kind of column. I figure if I reveal everything in my introductions, if I say everything there is to say, the most secret, private, alarming and dangerous stuff I know, then I need never be afraid in a story of writing something that will reveal those qualities. I go into that dungeon and open that door and look in that cell consciously and wittingly, because I think it's the only way to free up whatever it is in you that needs to be free to get to the soul and the burning core of the stories you write. I'm pilloried for this a great deal, particularly in England.

LOVED AND LOST

What is the situation with you and the British publishing world?

Horrendous. I can't find a publisher. Most of them don't want to work with me because they think I'm difficult, none of them wants to publish all of my work in all of the various genres. A few of them want the popular, science fiction or fantasy titles, but they won't touch *Love Ain't Nothing But Sex Misplaced* or *Sleepless Nights In The Procrustean Bed* or *Spider Kiss*. They don't want that stuff, they want to keep me in a box, so I just won't go with anybody. That's why none of my books are in print in England, and why there have only been about ten, I think, out of all of the 45 I've written, published in England in any form.

There's a hardness... a cynicism in some of your writing — particularly in the introduction to *Andy Candy* — that sug-

gests you may feel it's better not to love at all than to have loved and lost. Is there any truth in that?

Oh God, no. That's not me at all. No, I've always been one of those who risks whatever he can in a relationship. I like the company of women better than that of men, and as a consequence I've been very lucky in my life to have known a great many women, most of whom treated me very well. I had four unsuccessful marriages before I met Susan [Ellison's current wife]. One of these days, I'll get around to writing the story of a couple of my marriages and your hair will stand on end. They were quite remarkable. A couple of the ladies were seriously deranged and the others were okay. But in the main it was me, I was the problem.

I've always been kind of self-dependent, and that's not a good way to be in a marriage. And I was single for almost ten years before I met Susan. I was 50 at the time and I thought now is the time, I can settle into senility as a single man and not fuck up any more women's lives. I mean, enough is enough already, I've given it a shot, and I've been as interesting to women as I can be, but it is time to live alone. And then boom! Out of nowhere came this little dynamo that I married. I think it is far better to have loved and lost — I think it is far better to have done anything and lost — than not to have done anything at all.

I think courage and cowardice are the two things one must learn about very early on in life, otherwise you wind up marking time and putting in hours in windowless boxes for foreign masters without ever once realising your own dream. I'm constantly taking chances, I constantly risk everything because only when you risk everything can you reap the best benefits. If you got the impression that I separated myself from others because of the pain, that's not the case.

When my dog, Ahbhu, died, it was a terrible experience for me. He was such a good companion and meant so much to me that it was not the loss of a pet, it was truly the loss of something very, very important in my life. I'm not big on pets; as a kid I had dogs and when they died I was shattered, but it didn't stop me from getting a new dog. But with Ahbhu, there was so much between us. When he died that was the end of it. I saw no need to get another animal just to have an animal. It wasn't like that with him.

Just the same way, I suppose, that you don't go and get another father or another mother when they die.

Exactly. That's the way I felt about it. Ahbhu was singular in every way, and that's that.

HIDDEN EPIDEMIC

Is the complete Blood's A Rover going to appear this year?

I hope so. I mean, I've been working on it for quite a long time. The whole book is about 100,000 words. I've written the final section as a screenplay, so all I have to do now is change it to straight narrative. The reason the book isn't done is the same reason that *The Last Dangerous Visions* isn't done. I suffer from an illness that they now acknowledge as real and quite serious called Chronic Fatigue Syndrome — CFS. There have been a number of books about it and, in fact, a book was published by Random House last November called *Chronic Fatigue Syndrome — The Hidden Epidemic*. There they list four classic cases of CFS, these are Blake Edwards, the film director, Gore Vidal, the novelist, Randy Newman, the singer — and

the fourth one is me.

I've been suffering from it for about 15 or 16 years. It gets progressively worse as the years go by, and the most serious part about it is the weariness. It causes a lassitude that strikes me every day, so severely that I just lie down. I can't do anything. I can't watch television, I can't read, I am reduced to fucking jelly.

There is no cure for it. They're now discovered that in some way it's a second cousin to AIDS, in that it attacks the immunological system. It's a virus that keeps adapting. Sometimes I have good days and I'm able to write for a couple of hours and sometimes I have no good day at all for two weeks and I don't do shit! I haven't had a job in the movies in two years because of this. And every project I've had has been delayed. A thing I used to be able to do in a week now takes me three months. A thing I could do in three months now takes me two years. But nobody bothers to say 'The guy is real late but, by God, he got it out!' He said he'd do it and he did'. There isn't heart in them, there isn't that kindness. All that's in them is to be fans. And that's the mean part about it.

I suppose there are some good fans.

Well, yes, of course, but we're not talking about people who are decent human beings. It's like Poe wrote: no one harms me with impunity. I think that there must be balance in the universe and that people should not be allowed to get away with fucking over other people just because they're able to.

BLOATED AND WINDY

Why always the short stories and no novels? I know in the early days there were novels but nothing for many years.

The last novel I wrote was *Spider Kiss*, the

rock and roll novel.

The form of the novel is not as interesting to me as that of the short story or novelette. I'm delighted that I'm not writing novels these days, because what the industry demands are these bloated, windy trilogies of stupid books about dragons or mercenaries in space. I've always thought that the short story was a harder thing to write, and it's a nobler thing to write than a novel. In a novel, you can make mistakes, you can wander off, you can lose a chapter or two, and nobody really minds, because it's over the long haul. In a short story, you've got to be there, every second: you've got to be right on top of it. You've got to be like a quivering tuning fork.

It's not that I can't do novels. I can, and there are several novels I will do before I croak. But the stories I choose to tell are the kind that get in there like a punch under the heart. It seems to me that if a story can be told in one book, you should tell it in one book. I mean, Melville was able to tell *Moby-Dick* in one book. You would think that fantasy writers, who are certainly not as talented as Melville, could manage to do it in one.

What about people who write big books?
King springs to mind immediately, with something like *It* and the unexpurgated version of *The Stand*. What do you think about a book that runs to 1,200 pages?

Well, I'm not speaking specifically about Stephen here. I'm just speaking about 'the novel' in general. This is all marketing. It has nothing to do with literary quality. A publisher says 'Give me a big book'. Well, in my mind, a big book is *Lord Of The Flies*: it's a very thin book, but that's a big book. In my mind, *The Red Badge Of Courage* is a big book because it's big in ideas, big in passion, big in the quality of writing. Today we talk

BLOOD, SWEAT AND TEARS

The life and times of Harlan Ellison.

He is a literate, worldly, naturally gentle man, with a penchant for devastating put downs, often profane, usually amusing — if not downright funny — and always lethally barbed and unflinchingly accurate. He has written some forty-five books, scores of television and movie scripts, around 1,200 critical essays and articles and countless regular newspaper columns. He's been nominated for — and won — just about every major award linked to the fields of fantasy and science fiction, television and mystery. In short, Harlan Ellison is what is known in media hype terms as a 'living legend'.

Ellison's rapier wit and his tendency to say exactly what he thinks may have made him enemies of those who shy away from honesty — but many people regard him as a good and trusted friend, and consider his admittedly vitriolic voice to be the one truth in a firmament of falsehoods.

Harlan was born in Cleveland in May 1934, a late child. As he remembers it, the Ellisons were virtually the only Jewish family living in Painesville, Ohio. He gained his first writing experience when just nine or ten years old, drawing and writing comic books — using a

daisywheel toy typewriter — which he would sell around the neighbourhood. 'I was very strong on marketing. If the neighbours didn't buy the comic book, I would break their window.' But despite this tough attitude to life, Harlan was often attacked for his religious orientation.

According to Ellison, the history of antisemitism in America is well entrenched. 'For a nation born of people who fled oppression, Americans immediately turned into asshole rednecks. I mean, they left Ellis Island, went through stupidity school, and became bigots.' He was nevertheless able to cope with schoolyard bullying during his formative years. However, as his contemporaries began to grow — and his own increase in physical stature slowed down — things got a little more difficult. But Harlan more than made up for it with a growing scerbic wit. This, coupled with — as Robert Silverberg puts it — Harlan's absence of the fear-gag reflex, has frequently caused him trouble.

'Silverberg calls me "fearless". He doesn't mean it in the sense of me being a hero, it's just that I have no sense of fear. I'm just not frightened of things... like heights, or being

about 'big' in physical terms, just sheer amount of wordage. I think a work of art creates its own length, that its own length is inherent in its structure. And if you are true to the work, then you will write a book that is either short or long.

ETHICS AND COMICS

What about writing for TV? Have you had any second thoughts about going back to the medium?

Well, at one time I said I would never do it again, and then I got seduced back into doing it for *The Twilight Zone* which was a kind of special circumstance.

I am very concerned about ethical behaviour. Despite what my enemies say — and, you know, piss on them and the snake they slithered on — I live my life to a very high ethical standard. I mean, I *really* think

about what I do and what it means to people. I try very hard not to hurt people and I will go a long way not to cheat anyone.

Now, just me saying it makes it sound self-serving: if you ask people who know me, they may or may not vouch for that. But I'm human, like everybody else, and I make mistakes. Let's say in 1957, I said 'I will never write such and such' and, come 1987, I write such and such. Naturally, there is some little pissmire out there who remembers that quote from some fanzine or something and they write you this fucking letter saying [whiny voice]: 'In 1957, you said, blah, blah, blah and now here it is, 1987, and you did blah, blah, blah! It's 30 fucking years later, right? Consistency demands that you be as stupid today as you were yesterday!'

What about comics? I know that you're still a collector.

I love comics. I read them constantly. I wrote this major piece in *Playboy* last year about modern comics and their value and what I told out about them was that there are only five native American art forms: there's the banjo and jazz, the mystery story, as introduced by Edgar Allan Poe, there's musical comedy as we understand it today, and there's comic books. Those are the only complete originals that America's ever produced.

Comic books have been treated as a disposable literature over here ever since they began. They've been the subject of terrible censorship and worse. They've been the pawn of publishing companies that have kept artists and writers in a children's medium rather than letting them grow and expand.

And for every courageous person like Neal Adams back in the Sixties who got Siegel and Shuster their money, or a pivotal talent like an Alan Moore or a Grant Morrison or a Frank Miller, there are hundreds of cowardly little people who allow themselves and their talents to be used just to make a living. And they don't look on the comics medium as the rare and wonderful thing that it is.

You once said you regarded yourself as a cross between Jiminy Cricket and Zorro. What do you think you are now?

I'm a tough little fucker. But I'm not a mean little fucker and I'm not a hard little fucker. There's a difference between being tough and being hard. I don't brook much bullshit, but there's a lot of kindness in me.

Deathbed Stories, a collection of tales by Harlan Ellison, will be published in the UK early next year.

They would come into town, pass a lot of bad paper, write a lot of bad cheques, stiff the concessionaires... Anyhow, somebody made the error of picking the pocket of an Assistant District Attorney and he just closed the whole goddamn operation and threw everybody in jail. When they bailed everyone out, there were only two people left. One of them was the geek boy or the fat lady; all of those poor unfortunate people who had physical deformities or skin ailments — and the other one was me. The geek was called something like Animal Man, but they didn't bother springing him because they knew they'd find another wetbrain in the next town. And me, I wouldn't tell them who I was because I didn't want to go home. So, since I wouldn't tell them my name, they couldn't let me go.

"So here I am, sitting in this huge freestanding cell in the old Kansas City jail with this geek. They wouldn't give him anything to drink and he went crazy around about the second or third day. He climbed the bars and bashed his head against them and fell right down in front of me, and his face was all bloody, like a pound of raw hamburger. And I'm looking at him, and smelling the smell that was coming off him — it was the most gagging, nauseating smell. It could've stunned a police dog. And here I am, 13 years old and very impressionable and very scared, but not letting on, and I hear this voice in my head saying 'You will never be a drinker'.

Harlan escaped imprisonment when a detective, hired by his parents from the Pinkerton Agency, located him. He returned home — only to run away again, this time to

'They would say, 'Your mother wears army boots'. And I would say, 'Your mother sucks off diseased syphilitic giraffes'. I had a natural bred propensity for death-wish insults, even then.'

locked in closets, or being down in caves, or spider, or fire. And so I was never frightened of those kids. I wasn't particularly macho, but I certainly wasn't going to let anybody push me around. So, you know, they would say, 'Your mother wears army boots'; and I would say, 'Your mother sucks off diseased syphilitic giraffes'. I had a natural bred propensity for death-wish insults, even then.'

The cumulative effect of constant bullying made Ellison decide to opt out. 'Finally, I just said "Fuck it, I want out of here". So I took off. I was 13.'

ON THE ROAD

Ellison read *Toby Tyler: Or Ten Weeks With A Circus*, a popular children's book, and it made a huge impression on him. The nomadic life of the circus seemed attractive, but he couldn't find one. However, he did find a carnival. 'It was 1947 and there were a lot of travelling carnies. I saw the Tri-State Show and just joined on as a gofer. I was with them for six or eight weeks.'

'We were in Kansas City, and this particular carnival was a real "burn the lot" outfit — a euphemism for a not very savoury operation.'

Ontario, Canada, where he took a job as a tree-topper. It was here that Ellison experienced his first brush with death.

"Tree-topping entails the labourer securing himself to the bole of the tree by means of a leather strap attached to his belt and then, wearing cleats on his boots, climbing up by flinging the strap ahead. Once near the top, where the branches become so dense that he can't get any further, he trims off what is immediately around him and then, using only a cross cut saw, cuts off the canopy.

"When that canopy falls, the tree itself is like a rubber band and it twangs and springs back. We were working this stand of trees, this black guy and me, and I was watching him as he got rid of his foliage. As it dropped, his tree snapped back and his belt — it was an old belt — just let go. He was fired through the forest... he must have been going 75 miles an hour. We were finding pieces of him all over the place for days after: there were even bone parts driven into the trees.

I learned two very important lessons from this. It was one of my first associations with black people, and he had been a hell of a lot kinder to me than most white people I had known. I have tried and tried over the years, but I've never been able to remember his name, if I ever knew it. It just seems important to know the name of the first person you ever saw die. But all I remember, really, is that he was black. It seemed very meaningful, though I don't know why. There hadn't been many black kids in Peinesville, so I never had that prejudice, and I was able to draw a parallel between the way black folks were treated and the way I had been treated. It was for different reasons, because life isn't a comparison of chambers of horror, but it was the same canker, the same disease in the human condition. The second lesson — if you can call it a lesson — was that, because he died so suddenly, so unexpectedly, without any or appeal, it somehow equipped me to handle the suddenness and shock of violent death."

DYNAMITE

Now 14, Ellison hitchhiked out West. He tried unsuccessfully to get a job on the docks in San Francisco and, with little in the way of real opportunities, he took to the road, riding the rails and sleeping rough. He came back East down through the Gulf Coast and worked on a tuna boat off the coast of Galveston. He went back home, did some time at school, and then ran away again, this time to Shelby, North Carolina, where his uncle had once owned a jewellery store. He drove a dynamite truck for a construction outfit up in the mountains.

"I had taught myself how to drive and I lied about my age. I was 15 at the time, but nobody really believed — I was a fairly charming kid and I could lie like a trooper — and I got the job — because I guess they figured nobody else wanted it anyhow end it was a non-union job. And I drove this truck up and down the narrow, winding mountain roads.

Around this time, Ellison's father died. "I was back home at that point. It was May 1st, 1949. I had just come downstairs. My father was sitting in his big easy chair, reading the Sunday paper and smoking his pipe. And as I came down the stairs, he suddenly gasped and pitched forward out of the chair. He was dead almost immediately. There was such goodness in him. And we never got as close as we should have because I was off, you know, being an asshole, I suppose. When my dad died, my mother's life ended on that day.



Susan and Harlan Ellison

Photo: Alan Fishbein

she just became a shadow. What she became was 'Doc' Ellison's widow. That was the way she identified herself. She just kind of put in empty time after that, and I took sad note of it, and I realised, even then, what a waste it was. I determined that I would never live my life like that. I resolved not to waste my life in that fashion.

"But my dad's death absolutely shattered me, although I didn't realise it at the time. We moved to Cleveland almost immediately. My mother began working at different jobs and I started going to school."

THE WHOLE TRUTH

Back at school, Ellison's grades plunged downhill; he went instantly from straight As to failing everything, and he was thrown out of one school after another for getting into trouble. The biggest trauma came when he was taken off the school newspaper for which he wrote a regular column. "I was so proud of being on the newspaper. I would write all this stuff — it was during the Red Scare of the Fifties — about Senator Joseph McCarthy being a liar and an asshole and a monster. Well, the school was not about to have that — they were seeing Communists under every bed — and I was taken off the paper. And it infuriated me to be censored in that way.

"But that was where I learned that you must say what you have to say. You must never allow anything — not even your own fear — to keep you from writing the truth. I mean, I lose a lot of friends in the writing game, because I have to revise their work. And, as much as I may love them, if the work is not up to rigid standards of what is 'art', that's what I report. It's what serious criticism is supposed

to be! Many writers can't handle comment like that. I have no secret agenda when I do criticism, unlike so many in both the UK and the States, who use criticism to mask personal animus. But me, I expect that kind of treatment in a review. I demand serious reviews — that's the only thing that helps a writer. Otherwise you get lulled into a false sense of security. If you've been writing for 35 years, as I have, and you've achieved some degree of notoriety, you get very arrogant after a while. And you begin to think you can do no wrong.

"You look at all the other writers whose work has just turned awful as they've gotten older and no one apparently has the love or the caring or the courage to say to them: 'Goddamn it, you've grown soft. You don't have the muscle there. You've got to go back to your roots... go back to writing what matters to you. You've got to bleed a little.' You can't just continue to do a performance, which is what writing can become. The danger is in finding a way of doing things that have no soul in them, and that's why I respect people like Fritz Lieber and Kate Wilhelm and Mike Moorcock. Even when they are forced to do commercial work, there is always the understanding that their heart and their soul and their strength are still there and that, if they are not this time as original or as dangerous as they might be, next time they will be. Because that's what they do; because they're committed to it. That's what it's all about, I guess: being absolutely loyal only to The Work. Almost everything else passes, but The Work acquires a life of its own if it is a true rendering of the song."

Pete Crowther

GRAPHIC DE



ITAL

Illustrations clockwise from left: Aliens vs Predator. Martha Washington in Give Me Liberty. Peter Parker dons his Spider-Man outfit, and Ray Twenty-Seven in Tempus Fugitive



Can he swing from a thread? No, but Warren Lapworth is able and willing to give his views on a selection of comics and graphic novels. Watch him fly...

Homes and Gardens is the subtitle of part one of *Give Me Liberty* (Dark Horse, £3.50, Import) and traces fifteen years of Martha Washington's life from her birth in 1995. In the following year, Rexall is elected US President. An outwardly friendly, peace-loving man, he appears to be involved with dubious political operations behind the scenes, but he is re-elected twice before a firebomb injury forces him to suspend duties. Nissen, an apparently better candidate, replaces him as (temporary?) President, but the Peace Force (PAX) still exists, an army fuelled by the public and very much geared towards combat. Martha joins them after escaping a strict institution for the 'underprivileged'.

With plot by Frank Miller and art by Dave Gibbons, one of the most powerful writer/illustrator combinations anyone could think of, you'd expect a pretty special product. And with *Give Me Liberty*, you'll get one. Miller implies governmental corruption rather than specifying it and, although it's difficult to see how he'll make society decline, Martha's part in it is enthralling. Sharp, percussive narrative is matched by Gibbons' distinctive, top quality

visuals (shame his inking's on the heavy side), near-perfectly coloured by Robin Smith. Simulated magazine covers and articles are unusual, clever and typical of the fantastic attention to detail in this excellent graphic novel episode. Check it out.

WITH GREAT POWER...

Peter Parker and his web-swinging alter ego, Spider-Man, go from strength to strength — and from title to title. The web-head's fourth title's here, called simply *Spider-Man* (Marvel, £1). Unlike his usual concise stories, *Spider-Man* adventures will run to five or six parts. The first features the classic Spidey monster, The Lizard, reptilian alter-ego of Dr Curt Connors. This time The Lizard's completely devoid of humanity, a savage killing machine controlled by the jungle rhythms of an unknown master (surely they haven't brought Kraven back from the dead?).

The artwork's an immediate bugbear with me, as it's pencilled and inked by Todd McFarlane. Many people think he's wonderful (why?), but although his drawing's distinctive, it's inaccurate. Figures are out of proportion, their poses (particularly Spider-Man's) are unnatural and in some cases physically impossible (or at least very painful). Faces are stretched dough, 'nice' characters with bulbous noses and huge bulging eyes, 'nasty' ones with lowered brows and excessive wrinkles — McFarlane's Hulk looked like a prune. *Spider-Man* is full of big panels, many almost page size, yet in numerous places McFarlane has made his usual mistake — the bemasked Parker has no nose. Rick Parker's subdued

colours help, but overall visuals are highly unlikeable.

Okay, so in my opinion Todd McFarlane can't draw, but, in his first scripting venture, *Spider-Man* is also written by him. Guess what: he can't write either. Being an artist, he's stretched out the fact that The Lizard's on the loose and under someone's power to fill a whole issue, as he has plenty of room to show off his visuals. Very good for his ego, very boring for the reader. His narration's crass, his Peter Parker doesn't speak or act the way he should and the whole thing tries to be moody but ends up corny. One of the worst comics in Marvel's vast array of titles.

SILENT SCREAMS AND STEALTHY STALKERS

Dark Horse have (finally) released their big creature feature, *Aliens Vs Predator* (£1.75, Import). The setting is Ryushi, a bleak planet whose sparse population mostly consists of ranchers, herding rhinoceros-like rhynths. Machiko Noguchi is the corporate member overseeing the operation but she's had no direct dealing with the business. The ranchers, quite understandably, have scorn rather than praise for her. As she sets out to earn their respect, more serious problems are developing: alien facehuggers are infecting the rhynths and a Predator tribe has arrived.

First issues of comics, especially limited series, are generally scene setters and, although it's the case here, *Aliens Vs Predator* offers more to get your teeth into than most. Norwood's pencils are excellent but Story's inking is hesitant and Livingston's colours are bordering on the pastel, lacking dynamics. Overall, however, visuals are well above average, as is the comic on the whole. Action's a little lacking but narrative establishes the scenario and major characters very well, and there's a suitably cinematic air about the whole publication. An issue two is now available, reprinting the three preview stories from *Dark Horse Presents*, but personally I can't wait for *Aliens Vs Predator* 2.

SECOND FLIGHT

Ray Twenty-Seven is a gunship pilot from 65 years in the future who has rejected his questionable military responsibilities to escape into the past. In 'Section' 2 of *Tempus Fugitive* (DC, £3.50, Import), he's already in 1970 (approximately) and meets a colleague from the future. They're attacked while chatting in mid-flight and, although they both survive the dog fight, he's pursued through space and time by rivals from the future.

Tempus Fugitive is written and illustrated by Ken Steacy. Artwork can barely be faulted: colours are unusually bright, faces are

distinctively angular and pleasant, aircraft are realistic, shading and texture enhancing the look. But plot... Stupidly silly and corny dialogue (I hesitate to say childish) is the standard throughout; when it isn't naff it's tedious. But a description of the Earth's future, a view intended to be shocking but quite similar to previous 'predictions', the narrative is non-existent, reducing the atmosphere set up by visuals. It's absence adds no pace to this bland, immature time-skipping yarn.

LOVE BITES

Marvel's sleek covert agent, The Black Widow, is confronted with her Russian origins in *The Coldest War* (£5.95). Her ex comrade shows her videotape evidence that her beloved husband, long since presumed dead, is alive and well. Natalia Romanova is a widow no more. But before she can be reunited with her beloved, she must deal with the LMD (Life Model Decoy) control chip from the US government to show loyalty to the USSR. Is her husband's love enough to make The Widow betray her adoptive USA?

George Freeman's visuals are nicely formed but pretty sketchy. Some of the six inkers have done their job properly, tidying pencils up, but others have emphasised rough shading.

Thankfully *The Coldest War* doesn't fall into the obvious trap of heavy patriotism and Commie-bashing, but is sentimental in its conclusion and leaves one in no doubt that defection was The Widow's best decision. The LMD — an android under a pretentious title — is a pass fail, but it is just a plot device rather than the story's motive. A bit steep at £5 but one of the better superhero one-offs.

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?

Mahogany is the unlikely name of the vastly overweight murderer stalking the New York subway in *Midnight Meat Train*, the first story in Clive Barker's *Tapping The Vein*, book three (Titan, £4.50). Several of his many victims have been found stripped, shaved completely hairless, partially disembowelled and hanging from their feet in subway cars. Leon Kaufman works late, and guess who he meets on the tube home?

Artwork, by Denys Cowan and Michael Davis, is fitting for this streetwise horror thriller, with dark, atmospheric colours and lingering airbrushed shadows portraying a perfect slasher's environment and victim's predicament. Even as a straightforward psycho story, *Midnight Meat Train* is highly entertaining and as it progresses, or rather, gets weird, it grips you tighter.

Scapetago is less impressive. Four cruising friends run aground on a small, deserted, uncharted island and, as they wait for the sea level to rise, discover three penned sheep and experience strangely animated rocks. Bo Hampton's illustrations are well drawn but weakly inked and colours are wishy-washy. Sad to say, this suits the story, a bog-standard Lovecraftian discovery brought up to date (sort of) with a little sex and drunkenness. With the first story, however, *Tapping The Vein* 3 is a great introduction to horror comics.

FEAR FICTION

36 THE SHEPHERD'S DAUGHTER

By Brian Stableford.

Demonic possession and blind superstition threaten the life of a young girl.

39 FICTION FILE

Daniel Weiss

40 THE PALOVERDE LODGE

By Darrell Schweitzer and Jason Van Hollander.

Zombies on the prowl?

44 FICTION FILE

Diane Duane

45 SOLITARY SOLUTION

By Howard Baker.

Life imprisonment can be a time consuming affair...

49 THE BODY BEAUTIFUL

By Elizabeth Caine.

A cut above the breast.

51 FICTION FILE

Brian Lumley

52 BREAKING UP

By Steven Matthews

Internal injuries can be shattering...

54 A PROBLEM OF DISPOSAL

By Duncan Adams

Lust, leprosy and lies interfere with the burial of the dead in a post-nuclear landscape.

SUBMITTING SHORT STORIES TO FEAR
If you have written a short story which fits FEAR's horror, science fiction or fantasy brief, then send it to David Western, Fiction Editor, FEAR, Newfield, Ludlow, Shropshire SY9 1JW. Please indicate the wordcount of your story and enclose a self-addressed envelope with no more than 5,000 words long and typed, preferably double spaced. Remember to enclose a daytime telephone number, a postage quantity photocopy of your story, a fifty-word bio, an SAE for acknowledgement of receipt of your story and a further SAE for the return of your manuscript should it be deemed unsuitable.
Please note stories being considered for publication will receive notification of this in writing. This is not a guarantee that your story will be published and, as we receive hundreds of manuscripts per month, it could be some time before those eventually selected appear in print. We have been deluged with submissions recently, therefore it could take some considerable time, so please do not expect a reply or even a rejection. Please bear this in mind when submitting fiction to FEAR. Also it makes sense to keep a copy of your story... just in case.



Gothard could not stop trembling. When he sat down on the crude chair, and rested his arms upon the surface of the table he felt a little better, but still his hands quivered until he pressed them together. He had not been long in Holy Orders, having taken his final vows only four years ago, in 1511; he had not learned the powers of self-control which his elder brethren had developed in order to carry forward the never-ending war against the Devil. His face was very white, but the stare which he directed at Magnus the shepherd was as hard as the black stone whose sharp ridges beribboned the poor turf of the Carpathian foothills.

'Tell me,' he said to the sobbing Magnus, the words grating in his throat. 'Tell me what this means.'

And Magnus, who clearly felt that he had been alone with his anguish for too long, told him everything.

'She was such a pretty girl, father, my little Hilda. She was so lovely and full of life, so very happy. She should not have been a shepherd's child at all, but the daughter of gentlefolk who could have given her all the things which I longed to give her, but could not. Her mother died when she was still very young, but I could find no other wife, nor even a housekeeper to tend my lonely hut, though I looked for one in Ruthenia as well as my native land.'

'We were everything to one another, my daughter and I. She was so meek and uncomplaining that I came to believe that God must have sent her to teach me to be more content with the rough and meagre life which He, in His mysterious wisdom, had shaped for me. I had always been a mild man, father, and had tried as best I could to love God, but when the storms played among the

BRIAN STABLEFORD PERD'S DAUGHTER

I heard that in the villages round Bardeyov a company of witches had been found by the good Dominicans, and were to be burned when the full extent of their evil had been properly measured. When I heard this, my hope that the plague would soon die out was renewed. But the more witches were burned, the more were found, and still the sickness cast its shadow upon the realm — and I knew that Satan and his minions must have freer rein here than ever I had suspected. The curse upon my flocks was not lifted, and when the greater number of my ewes lay dead, my beautiful Hilda began to show signs of the breathing sickness.

'Such a terror then took hold of me that I would have sold my very soul to save her, had Satan appeared to offer me his bargain — but Satan did not appear, and I devoted all my energies to the business of keeping her warm and well-fed. Alas that I could not do it better, for such blankets as I possess have not sufficient warmth to keep the chilly winds at bay, and with the wealth of my flocks melting away by the day I had naught to feed her but mutton stew and half-spoiled turnips.'

I prayed to God and all the saints, father, as fervently as I could, but I knew that I had not been a good enough man to be granted any wishes, and I dare say that my prayers were twisted by my anguish into an errant form. When my prayers to God went unanswered, I was led by my extremity to call upon Satan

instead, saying: take another, but not my little Hilda; harrow every child in the land with the malevolence of your will, but spare mine, spare my only beloved!

'It was wrong to do it; I know that it was wrong, but I could not help myself. God had not answered, despite that the Dominicans laboured so hard to save the souls which Satan had corrupted, and I could not help but feel that if Satan's empire was secure in the land, then his sovereignty was best acknowledged.'

'But Satan was no more inclined than God to answer my cries for help, and I felt utterly alone in a world as dark as any Hell, forsaken by fortune in the deep well of my bitter wrath.'

The shepherd paused, stifling a sob, and looked at Gotthard as if challenging him to pass judgment. Gotthard felt some constriction in his own throat, but he suppressed it, maintaining his composure.

'Go on, my son,' he said, uncomfortably aware of the absurdity of addressing such words to a man six or eight years older than himself.

'Hilda grew worse with every day that passed,' continued the distraught shepherd. 'The fever grew in her and that dreadful coughing seemed sure to burst her heart. Every breath she took was ragged and harsh, and try as she might she could not draw air enough into her choking lungs. I bathed her head and tried to feed her mutton soup, but she could hold no nourishment within her, and the heat which possessed her flesh could not be soothed by the cold water on her brow. I could only hold her while she coughed, and I wept to see the blood which was mingled with the fluid.'

'On the fifth night of her illness she died... and all my prayers were turned to terrible curses, which I hurled at Satan and his demons, and likewise at God and all his angels, for there had been no help for my darling Hilda from any of them, and there was naught but bitterness in my heart and in my soul.'

The next day, a traveller came along the ridge, heading for the village. He would have hurried by, for he was loath to enter any house with the plague so widespread in the land, but I begged him to pause. I told him of my loss, and

pleaded with him to help me bury my child.

'He consented, but when he saw her lying on her bed he turned to me with a strangely dreadful light in his eye, and said that I was a wicked man, and hastened on his way.

Iwatched him go, and then I went to my poor dead Hilda, to look at her once more before I began to make a grave for her myself — but I found to my horror that she was not where I had left her.

I ran from the house, and looked wildly about, and saw her on the hillside yonder, walking in a very stiff and difficult manner.

I ran after her, and easily caught up — and when I looked into her poor dead sightless eyes I knew that some malefic daemon had been sent from Hell to claim her corpse for the legions of the dancing dead, in order to punish me for the wrath which I had vented in my curses.

I seized my poor darling and carried her back to my house, where I laid her on the bed again, and I quivered in fear of the forces which my curses had awakened. I knew that I ought to pray for forgiveness, but somehow I could not bring myself to do it, for so very many of my prayers had gone unanswered. I laid Hilda upon her deathbed once again, and tied her limbs so that she could not be taken away, but there was no more time to dig a grave that evening, and so I sat with her instead, watching the demon within her tease her poor limbs with jerks and twitches.

When I finally crept to my bed I slept very deeply, because my anguish had robbed me of rest for so many nights that I was utterly exhausted. But when I woke in the morning, the cords with which I had bound my Hilda's corpse were bitten through and she was gone.

I went searching for her, but I could not find her on the hillside, and by the time I caught up with her she had succeeded in making her way to the outskirts of the village. I could not abide the thought that the people there might see what an abomination she had become, and I tried to steal her away covertly — but half a dozen labourers and their wives came from their cottages, and while I wrestled with the demon-haunted body of my daughter they

looked on with such horror that I could hardly bear their gaze.

'Though they called after me in alarm, I ran away, with that struggling demonic obscenity which had been my beautiful Hilda clutched tightly in my arms.

'Again I bound her body to the bed, but I knew that I must keep ceaseless watch over her lest the necrophiliac demon which was within her sent her off on her ghastly journey yet again. Her face was very grey by now, and though the spring had not yet turned to summer I knew that the flies which love putrescent flesh would be very anxious to discover her and swarm about her being.

**"Her poor fingers
were so racked
and torn that the
flesh was all but
stripped from the
bone, and though
her teeth had
loosened in her
jaw as the gums
rotted away she
kept trying to
bite through the
cords which
bound her down"**

When a man I had long thought to be my friend came from the village to ask what had been the cause of the morning's commotion I asked him to fetch a priest who would help me commit my beloved's body safely to the ground and a Dominican to exorcise the demon which had come to inhabit it — and when I showed him what the demon had done to my little darling he could not conceal his horror and revulsion, and said immediately that he would send for the help which I needed.

'All through last night I was obliged to keep my vigil over the demon-haunted wreck of my beloved, for that spawn of Satan was exceedingly clever. Her poor fingers were so racked and torn that the flesh was all but stripped from the bone, and though her teeth had loosened in her jaw as the gums rotted away she kept trying to bite through the cords which bound her down. I had to put a strap about her neck and

bind it to the bedpost very tightly, while the demon inside her ranted and raved at me in some loathsome and detestable tongue which I could not understand.

'I tried to pray, but I could not do it, for the demon's babblings filled my head and would not let me bring order to my thoughts. When I gave voice, it was to an inarticulate howling which the wolves upon the hills were not ashamed to answer.

'When morning came at last, I could see the tiny worms moving within her flesh, which was becoming very pulpy beneath the darkening skin. I knew that it would not be long before they devoured her, leaving naught behind but a whitened skeleton — and how I feared to watch that skeleton dance a bony jig upon my floor, to mock my hopelessness.

'I have been in such agony while I have waited for you to come, father, that you cannot begin to understand my suffering. I could never have dreamed, until I was forced to watch it, what a pitiable calamity it can be to see the forces of corruption working within the helpless husk of one whose soul has fled. We are commanded to love one another, father, and whatever difficulty I may have had in following the other commandments I surely loved my beautiful daughter well enough. But where there is infinite love, father, there is also an infinite capacity to be hurt, and Hell has nothing in its seven circles which can torment me more than I have been tormented in these last few days.

I beg you, father, to assist me now. Implore God to give you strength to put the wicked demon from her body, and when you have done it, help me to dig a grave in which my Hilda might rest in peace, while her soul is safe in Heaven.'

Gothard watched as the weeping man seemed to crumble in upon himself, and wondered whether he ought to weep himself. He did not know what to do, or what to believe. He sat for a few moments in silence, restlessly fingering his rosary, and then he crossed himself.

'Magnus,' he said, finally. 'Your daughter still lives. Despite that she is near to starving... despite her snapped and twisted fingers... despite the bruises about her face

and legs... and despite that strangling cord which you put about her neck, she lives. She is calling for you now, though she is so sorely hurt that she can raise no more than a very faint whisper. Go to her, my son, and I will pray that she might yet be saved.'

Magnus ceased weeping then, and fixed the hapless priest with a stare more angry than any that Gotthard had ever seen before.

'Vile man!' the shepherd cried. 'Is every living being within this misbegotten realm a servant of Satan, sent to increase the horror of his torments? She is dead, I tell you — dead and demon-haunted, because I could not help but curse that cruel and answerless God to whom I prayed. Come with me, man, and see! Only see, with honest eyes, and the truth will be manifest! Tell me when you have seen through the veil of demonic illusion, is she not dead?'

Gotthard suffered himself to be drawn again by the tortured shepherd to the bed where his daughter lay.

'See!' shrieked Magnus, seizing a handful of his own hair as though he might tear it from his head. 'Is she not dead? Tell me the truth, *is she not dead?*'

It was with the greatest difficulty that Gotthard tore his eyes away from the shepherd's pain-racked face, which had in it all the misery and blindness of the damned, to look down at the bruised and broken body of the little girl, which was silent now.

She was so wretchedly thin that it was impossible to believe that she had ever been beautiful.

The priest touched his fingers to the girl's brow, and then picked up her tiny hand, and let it fall again. 'Aye,' he said, while a heavy melancholy took possession of his heart, 'she is dead — now.'

BRIAN STABLEFORD
started his novel writing career in 1969 with *The Cradle Of The Sun*. Balancing his literary life with an academic career, he quickly put out a series of impressive space operas including *The Blind Worm* and *The Hooded Worm* series. However, it was not until 18 months ago with the publication of his bestselling story of vampires *The Empire Of Fear*, that he took up fiction writing full time.

FICTION FILE 12

DANIEL WEISS

I s Unnatural Selection the most revolting book of the decade, or has the hype once again taken over from reality? FEAR's strong-stomached Liz Holliday grabs her sick bag and does lunch with controversial American author Daniel Weiss.

How to describe *Unnatural Selection*, the novel that American publishers found too disgusting to print? Daniel Weiss's book is about cockroaches living in a New York apartment, whose world is wrecked when the owner, Ira, has the old kitchen units replaced. One roach, Numbers tries to save the colony by persuading Ira to fall in love with the beautiful next-door neighbour...

As for the style, I am tempted to suggest *Viz* meets *Watership Down*, or maybe *The Fly* goes to Duncton Wood. The comparison Weiss prefers, however, is with Jonathan Swift. Like Gulliver, Numbers' difference in size allows him to see the human condition with inhuman clarity; but for this Weiss has been laid open to charges of racism and sexism (to say nothing of being just plain repulsive).

Says Weiss: 'I was just telling a story from a certain perspective, and the perspective was that of an animal that wasn't sensitive — or who had no respect — for social differences, and was only concerned with survival. From that point of view, watching what people do while not abiding by the niceties, it looks hilarious.'

The book is even-handed in its racism and sexism. Nevertheless, it is bound to offend some people: 'Americans are very prim on the subjects of sex, toilets and race. But the criticism from the United States... only the black part of it was a problem. Not the absolute degradation of Jews, WASPs, Italians, Asians... that didn't matter to anybody. It was just the black issue that got people upset. That's what I have a hard time with. If it was an even-handed criticism of the treatment of race by a different species, that I could consider as a criticism of some kind of objective merit. But because this one group is singled out for preferential treatment, that bothers me.'

His consternation is perhaps understandable, given that Weiss, an established non-fiction author, worked for six years on the book. In fact, he had a contract for it from an American publisher — a contract which disappeared after a change of editor. It has to be said that, 'isms' of all sorts apart, the book also throws traditional fantasy into a different light. Here you will find no epic quests for magic swords of power that will save the entire world.

The object is to move the money and get into the cabinet. For most people the cosmic



quest is something small like that. That's all you need. People don't need much, just a little security and happiness. They push for that end. And at that point, I identified with Numbers. He wasn't trying to save the race or change the world... he just wanted to get into the cabinet.'

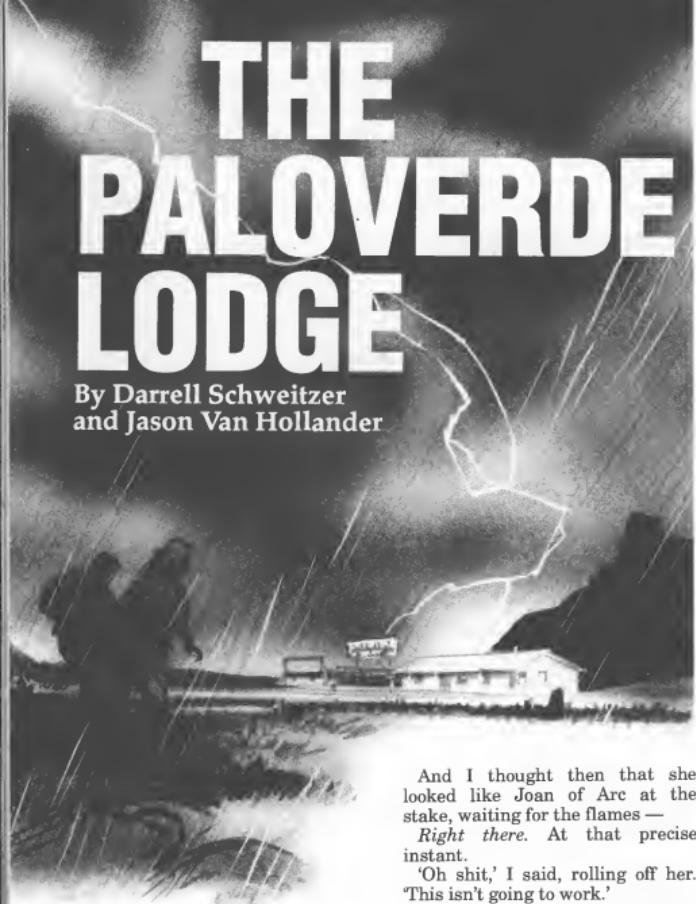
As you might guess, Weiss's influences lie outside the traditional SF/fantasy/horror genres. 'I really don't know what to tell you about that. I mean, I've worked alone all these years, and really haven't read much until recently. *Gulliver's Travels* is the work that comes most readily to my mind, but I just thought of an idea and wanted to make sure it worked out with integrity. That's why it took me so long.'

Unnatural Selection is not, however, his first novel; it's just the one that first reached the shelves. His initial attempt at fiction, *Hell On Wheels*, will be published after *Unnatural Selection*, although it was the first to be completed. It is, and I quote: 'A novel of handicapped men, and the women who love them'.

The mind boggles.

THE PALOVERDE LODGE

By Darrell Schweitzer
and Jason Van Hollander



I think I can recall the exact moment when things were hopeless between Janice and myself, when there could only be pretense and sham in the future, but never true reconciliation. The moment came when the words *sexual martyrdom* occurred to me, as Janice lay naked beneath me on the sandy cliff-edge — in the buff on the bluff, so to speak — in the windy evening air which was cooling almost as rapidly as my ardor. She panted. She arched her back, clawing the ground and my back with her hands, putting up a good show, but she clearly wasn't enjoying herself. Her eyes were shut, her face turned away so I couldn't kiss her grimacing mouth.

And I thought then that she looked like Joan of Arc at the stake, waiting for the flames —

Right there. At that precise instant.

'Oh shit,' I said, rolling off her. 'This isn't going to work.'

She lay still for an instant as if puzzled, then sat up suddenly, slapping her thigh.

'Ow! Something bit me.'

Something bit me too.

'Jesus —'

'Let's get out of here,' she said.

We started to dress and gather up our things. I could only reflect on how foolish we had both been, thinking we could abandon ourselves to ecstatic love in the Arizona wastelands when both of us were city kids, fretful about being away from telephones, libraries, hospitals, junk-food restaurants.

It had been her idea, as a last-ditch, crazy attempt to repair our three-year-old and rapidly failing marriage, to pull out of the fatal dive before the final, shrieking tailspin. We had hiked for three days, quiet much of the time, overwhelmed by the desolate magnificence of the landscape, by the awe-

somely dark, starry skies, and by, I think, the kind of ridiculous hope that flourishes as long as no one opens his or her mouth and begins to talk sense.

In the sleep of reason, optimism.

But something bit me on the ass and I woke up.

'I'm just tired,' Janice said.

'It was your fantasy, remember?' I said, shaking my boots out for scorpions.

She muttered something, not even words, I don't think.

'It was your idea. Christ, there was a survey once, in which ninety-fucking-per cent of high school kids said that if the world was to end in half an hour, they'd like to spend their last thirty minutes screwing on the beach.'

'Like in that movie, *From Here To Absurdity* —'

'Or was it *To Heave And Heave Not*?'

'Shut up and come on,' she said, shouldering her backpack.

The desert sky darkened, overcast and starless. A harsh, gritty wind blew, like God the cigar-smoker exhaling as hard as he could, and I had to hold up both hands to keep the sand out of my eyes. Nearly blinded, I tumbled into Janice, and the two of us fell into a cursing heap. Then, just as suddenly, the wind stopped and it began to rain. Within seconds we were sitting with our butts sunk in mud.

'Just my luck,' I said. 'Nothing but nothing seems to have gone right on this trip.'

'Enjoy your second honeymoon, Samuel,' Janice said icily. 'It's the last one you're going to get...'

It had been a mistake, everything, not just the camping in the desert. Communing with nature, reading to one another from *The Teachings Of Don Juan* by the light of an L L Bean Sportsman's Lantern, nothing had worked out, nothing made us any happier.

I reached for her hand. She jerked it away.

'We gonna sit here all night?' she said.

'I guess not, dear,' I said, rising, helping her to her feet. She accepted my hand that time, when the gesture was utilitarian, not one of affection.

'Shit,' she said.

N either of us said another word for nearly an hour as we slogged down the mountainside, utterly soaked, sliding in the mud

again and again as the trail slipped away beneath our feet like lumpy pudding. She pouted all the way. Whenever lightning revealed her face, she was puffy-cheeked, her lower lip protruding, like a small child who hadn't gotten her way.

Finally I spoke up. 'The rain will wash away our cares. Remember?'

'Shit!'

Somewhat it never occurred to either of us to stop and make camp. We would be dry inside the tent, if our luck held — no, if our luck *changed*, for the better — but I don't think either of us wanted to be that close to the other. Walking, we could at least have the sensation of *leaving*. Exit from marriage, stage left.

Here we were, two high-verbal types, both graduate students in linguistics, reduced to gestures, to the physical act of walking when words and thoughts failed. Sure, I could appreciate the hilarious irony of it.

Sure.



It seemed like hours passed as the rain poured down, and more than once I considered the very real danger of being swept away in a flash flood. We slogged on, ankle-deep in mud, heads bent down against the wind, water pouring down our collars as a result, sagebrush and cactus scraping against pants legs as we blundered onward.

I tried to find something to be cheerful about, anything.

'Shit,' Janice shouted. She made a march out of it: 'Shit! Shit! Shit-shit-shit!'

'Eat your beans, they're good for your heart, the more you eat the more you —'

She whirled around and gave me the most poisonous look imaginable.

'You just shut up. Okay? Shut up.'

'Look! A light! We're saved!'

For a moment I didn't think she believed me. She was about to hit me. But then she turned back and saw that there was indeed a light. Both of us ran for it. Lightning flashed again, and I made out sheets of water rippling across a road and a series of low, wooden buildings, one of them with a porch and a light in the window. A neon sign flickered by the edge of

the road.

'Paloverde Lodge!' Janice gasped, slowing to a staggering walk. 'Thank God.'

'Any port in a storm.'

She actually smiled at me then. 'Damn right.'

When we stood on the porch and knocked frantically at the door, thunder crashed again and again. Janice was shouting something. I couldn't make it out. But then the storm quieted a little, and I knocked once more and heard footsteps within.

'Let me guess,' she said. 'This place is owned by a ninety year old boozed-up desert rat named Pappy who hasn't seen a soul in twenty years except for his mule Esmerelda —'

That was more like the Janice I'd once known, who knew when to be silly. I slid my hand gently around the back of her neck.

'No, it's run by this very nice, but *strange* young man who never goes out much, but is very good to his mother. He has a *thing* about showers —'

She brushed my arm away.

'That's not very funny. You never were.'

Before I could make any reply, the door opened, and the two of us slouched inside. The air-conditioned air made us shiver. Our host was a silver-haired older man in a dinner jacket who had been sitting at a table by himself playing cards. The room was a combination motel office and restaurant. There were three tables, a dozen chairs, and a juke-box in the corner.

'Greetings,' he said. 'Greetings. Have a seat. No, better yet, a towel. The laundry room is right up the hall. I'll be back in a jiffy —'

'That would be magnificent,' I said, as Janice and I slumped into chairs.

'Help yourself to some coffee,' the old man said, indicating a pot and a state-of-the-art coffee maker.

As soon as he was gone, I whispered to Janice: 'So, what exactly do you propose we do?'

'Take a cabin. What else? I'm not going back in that rain.'

'And then —?'

Before she could reply the owner returned, his arms full of big pink towels with bleach marks. The old man was beaming, his right hand outstretched. 'Didn't introduce myself,' he said eagerly. 'Jack McMasters's the name. Owned the Paloverde since I can't remember

when. I've tried to keep the place from falling apart.' Then his smile faded. He put the towels down on the tabletop between us and indicated the room. 'It's so filthy. I have to apologise for that. I try and try and —'

I'd buried my face in a towel, but when I looked up and started to examine the room, I was genuinely puzzled. The place was spotless. The furniture needed a new coat of finish, most of it, the tables and chairs seemingly worn away by obsessive cleaning.

'You seem to be doing a fine job to me,' I said.

He said nothing. I hoped I hadn't somehow offended.

Lightning struck very close. The panes in the windows shook. Seeing what he took to be Janice's alarm, the old man went on. 'Don't worry about the weather. It's not like we're going to slide into the canyon.' There was another pause. We sat listening to the rain. Janice glared at me, as if trying to flash a telepathic message of, *So, say something, stupid!* But McMasters ignored us and continued talking, almost as if he wasn't aware of us. It was a monologue, addressed to empty air, or, perhaps to someone else, out there, in the storm, someone listening.

I wondered who was going stir-crazy faster, me or Jack McMasters.

'Glad to have some real company for a change,' he said, smiling. He sat down at the table with us, cutting the deck of cards, then offering them to us. 'You play?' *[Note: The original document contains a small redacted area here.]*

'Not really...'

Janice kicked me under the table.

'A little,' she said. 'Well enough.'

'Great.' He dealt out three hands of poker. No one suggested betting anything. We played. I realised then that Janice and I were still sopping wet. Somehow we'd overlooked that small point in the confusion of the moment.

She sneezed. Then McMasters rose from the table and brought us both coffee, which we drank gratefully.

'Sorry,' he said. 'I forgot my manners sometimes. Gets so a man forgets what it's like to be with his own kind — people, I mean.' He laughed and made an ambiguous gesture. 'What I mean is, we don't get much clientele this time of year — or any other, for that matter.'

'We —?' Janice said.

'Only me. Only myself here.' The old man poked his own chest. 'Only the three of us.' He seemed to be having difficulty saying something more. Then at last he managed, 'My Loretta passed away not too long ago.'

'I'm sorry,' I said. That's what you always say. *I'm sorry*. The useless formula that heals no wounds. 'Must get lonely here.'

'Mister,' Jack McMasters said intently, pointing at me across the table, 'no matter what you hear about the pleasures of solitude, don't ever believe it. People are what life's all about. Living, breathing people. And love. And being young. There's still hope then. If anything isn't right in your life, there's still a chance you can change it. It isn't too late. The possibilities aren't used up yet.' He gazed out of the window, into the storm. 'I envy you both,' he said softly.

I reached under the table for Janice's hand, and she didn't resist me. I tried to gauge the old man's emotions, but couldn't. I think he suppressed a grimace, as if he'd felt a sharp stab of pain. Then he rose and fetched more coffee. He came back with a tray of donuts.

'On the house. As many as you want.'

Janice and I each took one gingerly. Mine was stale. I didn't say anything.

'How long are you planning to stay?' McMasters asked.

'Not long,' I said. 'We'll have to be going soon.' It then occurred to me that one doesn't carry much money on a camping trip, and quite possibly I didn't have enough on me to pay for even one night's room.

'You can't be planning to take your lovely wife out into that mess.' He indicated the storm.

'Actually, we're lost,' said Janice. 'We'll be happy to stay.'

I got out my wallet and pointed, hoping that she'd see and McMasters wouldn't.

'Off-season rates, discounted at that,' the old man said. He got up again and went to the window, gazing out into the night. Lightning flashed, illuminating his face. 'Hell, you can stay for free —'

'We wouldn't want to take advantage —'

'Sam,' Janice whispered. 'How thick can you be? He's telling us he wants some *company* —'

'Look at this,' the owner of the

Paloverde Lodge said suddenly, turning around. He drew a whole wad of bills out of his jacket pocket. 'There's plenty more where that came from. So I don't need your money, believe me. You look like good people, clean-cut, with decent lives filled with hope and... *possibilities*. So, please, stay with Jack McMasters. On the house. Now tell me, what do you folks do with yourselves when you're not getting lost in the desert?'

I explained briefly that we were both graduate students, Janice a PhD candidate, me closing fast on an MA.

'Scholars, then? Loretta was sort of a scholar. Well, she didn't actually have a degree or anything. Never went to college. But she read books. She was real interested in the local lore. Indian stuff. It was in her blood.'

'Oh...' I suppressed the urge to say more, feeling like an astronomer confronted with, *Oh, my wife was a space scientist too. She rode flying saucers all the time*.

My Loretta was part Hopi. Had some Mexican blood too. She'd go away for days at a time, into the desert, searching for lost Indian burial grounds and such. There's one she found nearby. Bunch of stone markers arranged in some kind of pattern. That's where she... that's where Loretta rests.'

Just then I heard a noise like a tree branch brushing against the window pane. Only there were no trees outside, I suddenly remembered. I looked up and saw someone outlined against the glass by lightning, a bent figure, ashen, emaciated.

Janice stifled a scream. 'That man looks like he's been hit by lightning — burnt —'

'Oh,' our host laughed nervously. 'Ignore that shabby bag of bones. Just a vagrant.'

'How terrible,' I said, wondering why I said those words, unsure of how a vagrant can be *terrible*, but certain somehow that I actually meant precisely that.

'Be back in a minute, folks.' McMasters put on a hat and raincoat and hurried outside. For an instant the storm was inside the room, a blast of spray. Then the door slammed shut and the air was still. In the darkness, the ragged figure tapped at the window insistently. Janice looked at it, then away. I thought she was going to

faint. I tried to convince myself it was just fatigue catching up with her.

Then Jack McMasters was shouting something over the roar of the storm. I got up and peered out. He had confronted the creature in the driveway, wagging his finger, pointing, repeating some word I couldn't make out over and over. The vagrant or whatever it was cringed, a sodden mass, almost shapeless. For a minute I thought it was a bundle of sticks and mud somehow come to life, not a person at all. But no, it moved like a person, crawling behind a dumpster. Jack McMasters threw a rock after it, then another, hard, as if he were afraid or angry enough to do deliberate injury.

But then he walked over to the window, tapped in front of my face and smiled. Problem solved. He came back inside, dripping. For a minute or so he tried to continue the conversation, making some remark about how hard it must be to get an educational loan these days. I found myself mumbling some nonsense about grants and austerities. Then the old man noticed that he was wet to the skin despite his raincoat, and he suddenly produced a key, which I accepted without any argument. Janice was in no mood or condition to discuss things further.

'The Honeymoon Suite,' Jack McMasters said. 'I expect you'll want to get on dry clothes and rest up some. Then, dinner at eight. Only chili and refried beans, I'm afraid, though.'

'That will be fine,' I said. 'Thanks.'

I manoeuvred Janice out of the restaurant. Her eyes were closed and her hands covered her face. For an instant the weather blasted us, but the walkway to our room was covered by a sloping roof, which helped a little. I glanced over toward the dumpster, wondering what had become of the vagrant, not really feeling sorry for him. I was beyond caring. It had been, all told, a ghastly day. Not uninteresting, but ghastly.

The Honeymoon Suite. Yeah, right. Stick the knife in. Twist.



Later, I watched the shadows of my wife as she washed in the bathroom. Against the dust-colored walls her shadow was black, evoca-

tive of Plutonic glooms. A thunder-clap and a brilliant flash merely interrupted my contemplations. They resumed. The shadow put on shadow panties.

'Honey? Are you feeling a little better?'

'I'm a little dizzy. I hope it wasn't the donuts.'

'Well, I was just thinking. We're in the Honeymoon Suite and, you know, I just thought — I dared to hope, just a little bit. That's what I was really thinking.'

'Forget it!' She emerged from the bathroom, bra-less, but pale and annoyed and somehow not at all alluring. 'I just don't feel like making love after... that poor creature.'

'It happens everywhere Janice. You can't help 'em. Neither can I. Even out here where there are no

'The sodden mass of its head rested on his shoulder, cradled against his scrawny neck'

streets — street people. When it rains, they get wet.'

'This one looked dead.'

I glanced at my watch. 'It's five minutes to our exotic meal at the exotic Paloverde Lodge. We mustn't keep the chef waiting —'

'Don't be a smartass. He's being very good to us.'

I watched her dress. Her movements were clumsy, tormentingly slow.

Twenty minutes had crawled by before we made our entrance, in our best hiking clothes, clean and only slightly rain-splattered. Jack McMasters was waiting for us, showing no sign of impatience. He wore a tuxedo of raw silk, blue and shiny, hopelessly out of date. I refrained from making any comment.

'While you were preparing yourselves,' he said, 'I went to Loretta's room and got some of her books, You two, being scholars and all, might like to have them.'

'Thank you very much,' Janice said.

He handed over three thick volumes, all from the later nineteenth century, all dealing with American Indian folkways.

'They look like more your field than mine,' I said to Janice. Indeed, the tribal languages of the

South West were her specialty.

'Thank you again,' she said, putting them aside on the table.

Something rapped at the window. I looked up, more alarmed than I could account for, but there was only the glow of the neon sign; other than that, only darkness and rain. Cheerfully, Jack McMasters excused himself and shut all the drapes. Still smiling, he locked the front door. 'The lodge is just not open for business tonight,' he said. He flicked a switch and the neon sign went out. A second switch extinguished the porch light. 'Now we can get to know each other better.'

'These look like great books,' Janice said.

Loretta always said that books only go so far. Real knowledge, she always told me, couldn't be found in books.'

I met Janice's gaze. She smiled unconvincingly and said, 'Of course that depends on how you define real knowledge.'

I mean real knowledge of how the world works. The rules of life and death, as a case in point. Loretta insisted that 'real knowledge' is deliberately left out of books, that nobody could write it even if they wanted to, like it had a way of protecting itself somehow. Sometimes she's very opinionated, my Loretta.'

Janice paled. 'Sometimes — ?'

'I mean she used to be opinionated. When she was still alive.'

I felt a touch of real pity for the man. His dead wife still filled his days and his thoughts, as if she had never gone, because there was no one else for him.

'It must be very lonely out here all alone,' I said, feeling slightly embarrassed, hoping he wouldn't take that as patronising.

'Being alone is bad, like I said before. But there's worse. A lot worse. Nothing, I think, is lonelier than a bad marriage, one you can't get out of. An endless marriage...'

'These days there are always quickie divorces,' Janice said, puzzled.

The old man scowled. 'That's fine when two people want to go their separate ways. But what do you do if the other person won't leave? What's a man to do if his ex keeps coming back, clinging to him, and not playing by the rules?'

I couldn't find anything to say, nor could Janice. We sat once more in awkward silence.

The rain. The wind. Thunder. Tapping at the window.

Sighing, the old man rose and began to serve dinner. 'Rules,' he said. 'Like Loretta said, the rules that matter aren't in any books. You have to, I suppose, learn them some other way.'

We ate in silence. It was not my idea of a pleasant evening. I did notice Janice glancing at the books from time to time, as if they were treasures she couldn't wait to dig into. I was glad for her. At least someone had gotten some benefit out of the fiasco our alleged Second Honeymoon had become.

The tapping at the window became louder, more insistent as, at last, the storm began to die down. I couldn't stand it. I wanted to shout something, even to run outside and confront the vagrant, whatever —

But Jack McMasters simply rose from the table and said, 'Say, folks. There's something I have to attend to. Excuse me. I may be a while, so just leave the dishes on the table when you're done.' He peeked out behind a drape, then put on his hat and raincoat, but left by the back way, through the laundry room behind the office.



Much later Janice and I managed to make love in the darkness of the Honeymoon Suite, not particularly well, but as long as we groped for one another wordlessly we did not argue and the function was performed. Then we lay still for a while, listening to the silence of the distant wilderness, and the nearby dripping of rainwater off the roof. I must have slept for a while because I awoke with an aching stomach as the Mexican food refused to rest easy.

But I paused on my way to the bathroom. The window was open. Moonlight shone through, and in it, naked on top of the covers, Janice glowed. She was breathtakingly beautiful just then. It was all I could do not to weep, not at the sight of her, but at the realisation that we could still turn back upon the path we'd walked the last few years. We could still love each other again, as we had, if we tried, for a while at least. As Jack McMasters had said, the possibilities weren't all used up yet. If only we dared —

As I returned from the bathroom,
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a cloud had covered the moon and the room was dark. A grunting noise from outside caught my attention. I went to the window and looked out.

The night was dark, but I could see clearly enough. I saw them outlined against the pale desert sand: the old man, half naked, and the other. I heard him sobbing in despair, and I knew the voice and I knew the man. It was Jack McMasters, bare-chested, arm-in-arm with the ashen creature. The sodden mass of its head rested on his shoulder, cradled against his scrawny neck. Affectionate nuzzling. Only then was I absolutely certain that the 'vagrant's' contours were feminine. There was no mistaking it.

Ten minutes later I was dragging my half-dressed and still protesting wife down a muddy hill, both of our backpacks in hand, stumbling against stones and cacti. She kicked me once or twice. She screamed every obscenity she knew. I was stronger than her. I prevailed. After a while she went along quietly.

But I could not explain. I would not. Ever. I merely knew that there are far, far worse marriages than ours.



Janice and I were divorced when we got back to civilisation. It seemed, then, the only decent alternative. As the years passed and we met again professionally, at conferences and the like, I found that I respected her more at a distance than I had when we were married. I even grew to like her.

But I never told her what I saw that night, and she never told me what she must have surmised. We do not share such intimacies. We have gone our own separate ways.

DARRELL SCHWEITZER's short story *Angry Man* appeared in FEAR Issue 16. He is a prolific author of horror and fantasy fiction and editor of the US magazine *Weird Tales*.

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FICTION FILE 13

DIANE DUANE

Spock's World was the first Star Trek hardcover, and it didn't take long for this continuation of the world famous SF saga to hit the New York Times bestseller list and for fans to hail its author, Diane Duane, as a literary messiah. In the midst of all the hysteria, FEAR's Liz Holliday managed to keep her head and asked the scribe some tough conceptual questions about her novel.

For many Star Trek fans, Mr Spock is undoubtedly the main attraction of the series. One would think, therefore, that a book about Vulcan would — logically — be a sure fire success.

Spock's World by Diane Duane is just such a book, and it has certainly been successful in commercial terms. The novel is set some time between the first and second feature films and comprises two interwoven stories. The first, which concerns the crew of the Enterprise, tells of the planet Vulcan's decision to secede from the Federation.

The most notable aspect of the earlier part of this book is the way in which Duane concentrates on the mundane detail of running a starship: 'That's the best part of it as far as I'm concerned. I'm tired of nothing but earth-shaking things happening on that ship. I want to know where the food comes from. I want to know where the toilets are. These are the things that matter to human beings in the short run. It can't all be earthshaking stuff.' Maybe not, and Duane's point is well taken, but such stuff becomes a little tedious after a while.

The scenes on Vulcan, during the secession debate, give us a view of the planet we have not often seen: one in which the Vulcans are not quite so inscrutable, and where they are more various than we might previously have supposed. Here, of course, Duane meets a problem common to most series book authors: we all know very well what the outcome will be. I must admit I thought the secessionists might have been given some better arguments — isn't the devil supposed to have all the best tunes? Not here, it would seem.

There are a number of references to other Star Trek materials, which is odd considering Duane's assertion that this is 'now kind of frowned on'. I wonder how inaccessible these references made the book to new



readers (if there are any new Star Trek readers out there, of course...)

In her defence, Duane has this to say: 'You try to keep it as accessible as possible. I mean, granted that eighty per cent of the people who read the book are going to be familiar with the background. In this particular one I was careful to explain things as fully as the flow of the story made possible. You have to strike that balance between referring to something deeply enough that new readers will be able to make some sort of head or tail of it, and stopping the narrative flow entirely while you tell them everything they need to know about the subject, which may not actually be necessary.'

The other strand of the novel gives us a series of short stories showing Vulcan's history from earliest times to the 'present'.

No doubt they would all be of interest to the hardened Star Trek fan, and Spockaholics will certainly get a kick out of Amanda and Sarek's courtship — to say nothing of the conception of Spock.

Duane's Vulcan differs greatly from the descriptions given in the books or set pieces shown on television or in the films. She promotes the idea that all Vulcans are constantly aware of God, that they are more emotional than we have been told, and that Surak (the founder of their logic system) is a kind of Christ figure. Personally, I preferred the Vulcans — and found them more alien — when they were rationalists.

I have to admit that I'm not much of a Star Trek fan; but for anyone who is, this book is probably required reading.

The jury reached its verdict in just under twenty minutes, the High Court Computer in less than one fifth of a second. Garrity, by now resigned to his fate, declined to delay the inevitable — merely shaking his head tiredly when offered a last chance to speak. Only the judge, an ageing anachronism in wig and robes, took longer than necessary to do what was required.

'George Edward Garrity, the jury is unanimous in finding you guilty of the murder of Simon Ransom.' The cold, grey gaze impaled Garrity, then swept across the courtroom. There have been a number of conflicts of evidence in this case but, despite this, one unassailable fact has emerged. That is that Simon Ransom was a man of considerable courage and dedication. Had he not been so, then the crime which has formed the background to this case might well have been perpetrated successfully. I have little doubt that the tribute of this court will be of little comfort to those who are left to mourn, nevertheless I would be failing in my duty if I did not publicly commend the action of this brave young man for whom the phrase 'guard with one's life' was not merely a phrase but a sacred duty.'

A measured glance at the papers before him. The climax had arrived. 'George Edward Garrity, in accordance with the Criminal Justice Act of 1997, the details of this case have been recorded within the High Court Computer, which has classified your crime as that of murder — section two. In accordance with the scale of penalties laid down by the law, I therefore sentence you to fifteen years in prison.'

Fifteen years. The tiled corridors echoed to the clatter of boots, but Garrity was deaf. The now familiar labyrinth slid unnoticed into the past as he was escorted from the law courts for the last time. Vaguely he heard the doors of the van close at his back. Fifteen years. He would be forty-five, forty with full remission. He tried to imagine it, and could not.

The electric motor whirred into life, then settled down to a steady hum as the van pulled out of the gateway. It should have been steadier — probably a minor short

SOLITARY SOLUTION



Howard Baker

on the feeder circuit. Garrity thought of his garage. Les was a good electromech — one of the best — and Tanya might succeed in holding down the business side... But what was there to hold down Tanya? He dredged a bitter smile from the depths of his despair, remembering how he had shied away from the idea of marriage. He had wished to retain his freedom.

A fine rain was drifting down — or up, it was hard to tell which — by the time the van pulled in through the prison gates. Stepping out, Garrity found himself in a small, grey courtyard. From one of the tall, wire-topped walls a television camera studied him with a detached, Cyclopian eye. He waved to the unseen watchers, and got no reaction from the warden at his side. It was nothing new.

Processing was carried out in a long, low building adjoining the courtyard. The photographs and fingerprinting were mildly interesting, but after surrendering his suit for one of prison grey, and sitting through the regulation haircut, Garrity began to feel that

his identity was being dismantled. Finally, he was taken through to the main block, escorted to the second floor and installed in a small room not unlike — both in appearance and atmosphere — his dentist's waiting room. As he sat facing a row of empty chairs, he reviewed his feelings. Curiously, relief seemed to be the dominant emotion. So far, the warders had shown none of the sadistic traits that rumour described so graphically. But it was early days, yet.

After a few minutes a door opened and a slim, secretarial-looking girl beckoned them through, first into an outer office then into the governor's office. The warden came to attention. Definitely ex-army, reflected Garrity. He could almost hear the echo of 'Alt! Off caps!'

'The prisoner Garrity, sir.'

'Ah yes, thank you Evans.' With one smooth gesture the grey-haired man dismissed the warden and directed Garrity to a chair. Garrity seated himself cautiously, studying the room. An office it might once have been, but its

practical function was now hidden as completely as the grey plastex tiles which undoubtedly lay beneath the deep, wine-red carpet. And the clock... No electrical contraption silently swept away the hours for the occupant of this room. Instead, an ancient grandfather clock stood proudly in the corner, saluting the passing seconds with its resonant tick. Almost all the remaining wall space was taken up by bookcases, their shelves lined with finely bound volumes.

Hmm, so you're Garrity.' The grey-haired man closed the file on his desk and leaned back in his chair. 'My name is Redgrave. I am the governor of this prison.' He tapped the file. 'I see that you served in the army at one time, so you should not find the discipline here too irksome. I assume it was the army that gave you your knowledge of firearms?'

Garrity said nothing.

'Hmm.'

There was a knock at the door and the secretary entered with a loaded tray. When she had gone Redgrave settled back in his chair, his coffee cup cradled in his hands, and spoke in a quiet, almost toneless voice.

For someone without a previous record suddenly to attempt an armed robbery is almost unheard of. Could I enquire what led you to take this step?

'Nothing led me. I didn't bloody well do it!' Garrity's hands were shaking. He drank his coffee down at a gulp, before the rest went in his saucer.

'I see. No doubt, then, you will be appealing.' Redgrave extracted a sheet of paper from the file. 'Meanwhile, we'd better get on. You have been sentenced to fifteen years and it is my duty to explain just what this means. You will be housed in a three-roomed cell, comprising bathroom, kitchen and living quarters. Your daily routine will be as follows. You will rise at 7.00...'

Reflections from the strip-lights struck golden sparks from the pendulum of the grandfather clock; Garrity watched it flicker back and forth.

...You will leave your cell for exercise, returning at 16.00... An atheist, therefore no special arrangements will be made for Sundays... Following items will be made available to you...'.

Reaction to the events of the past few weeks was beginning to set in. Garrity found himself nodding to the metronomic ticking of the clock.

'...But no one apart from these persons will be allowed to visit you. Is that understood?'

Garrity nodded ponderously.

'Good.' Redgrave pressed a button on his desk. 'There is one other thing. We run a tight prison here. Any attempt to escape will be doomed to failure.'

The warden appeared.

'Ah, Evans, would you take Garrity along to the dispensary?'

Corridors. Grey corridors that seemed to lead uphill. Blank-faced doors swelled open to let them pass. Beyond one of these lay the dispensary, a small, bottle-lined room containing a medical couch and two white-coated individuals who were poring over a large graph.

'Garrity, sir.'

'Jolly good. Thanks, Evans.' The taller of the two, a pale, bearded man, approached Garrity as Evans departed.

'Right old man, jacket, shirt and vest off and up on the old couch.'

Garrity complied, fumbling with the unfamiliar buttons. He was very tired now, but somehow he made it, and lay back panting. Beard hovered over him, and a stethoscope printed icy circles across his chest.

'Just giving you the once over,' explained Beard genially. 'Can't have you pegging out on us, can we?' He went about his job methodically and finally straightened up and disappeared from view. A moment later Garrity caught the hiss of an air-hypo.

'What's this for?'

'Sedative, old man.' Beard was at his side again. 'First couple of days are sometimes a bit nerve-racking. This'll see you through.'

Garrity opened his mouth to protest, then felt the cool breath of the instrument on his arm. Beard turned to speak to his assistant but the booming echoes obscured his words. The ceiling lights blazed for a moment with unnatural brightness, then they flickered out, and Garrity slept.

He awoke to find himself lying on a bunk in the cell which Redgrave had described. The clock on the wall said 7.00. He rose, inspected the rooms thoroughly and

discovered that to a large extent he was self-contained and self-supporting. The kitchen was equipped with a small stove and a refrigerator containing a week's supply of food, there was hot and cold water in the tiny bathroom, and the desk in the main cell held a chessboard and writing materials. There was also a book: Eliot's *Silas Marner*. Garrity could vaguely remember having read it at some time, possibly during his school days. After a while, he began preparing his first do-it-yourself breakfast in captivity, and afterwards he made up the bunk, then washed and shaved. After so much that was strange, the familiarity of the face in the mirror startled him.

It was a long morning. He read, toyed with the chess pieces, then simply gazed out of the window. The view was not inspiring, consisting as it did of a large yard bounded on the three visible sides by high walls and intersected at two-thirds of its length by a wire mesh fence. There was a heavily padlocked gate in the fence, and beyond this a black door set in the wall. Apart from the rolling, grey clouds overhead, nothing moved.

At midday, Garrity cooked a meal, more to occupy himself than because he was hungry, then he returned to the book — impatiently killing time until 15.00, when someone must come to escort him out for exercise. No one came. At 15.15, he expressed his impatience by hammering on his cell door. To his astonishment, it swung open after the first few blows. Puzzled, he sidled out into the weak sunlight and found that his cell was quite detached — an island set in the centre of the yard. He studied the fence and found the padlocks on the gate to be just as solid as they appeared. The walls, at close range, stood even higher and silence over everything was complete. He might have been on another planet.

At length, he found himself back at the door of his cell, and no sooner had he entered than it closed behind him. He pushed it. It was unyielding, and after a few attempts he shrugged and went through to the kitchen to prepare his tea. As darkness fell the lights came on, and outside floodlights bathed the walls in a harsh, white glare. After tea, he lay on his bunk

reading, and it was there, at 21.00, that sleep found him.

A week of days. The pattern remained identical, but on the morning of the eighth day Garrity awoke to find the cell cleaned and tidied and a fresh supply of food in the refrigerator. He swore then, partly from fright and partly from disappointment. He had realised, watching the dwindling food supply, that someone must come and he had been looking forward to seeing another face, hearing a different voice. The book was now read, the few chess problems he had ever heard of were now solved. It was becoming increasingly difficult to stifle the memories...

A month of days. The sense of unreality was fast becoming the most tangible thing about the whole situation. On the last night of each week Garrity fought to stay awake. Inevitably he lost,

'He came up against the wire, charged and tore at it until the snow was speckled with blood from his torn fingers'

waking to a clean cell and re-stocked refrigerator. His book was removed and replaced with Shakespeare's *Henry V*. He had read it before. He tried to break the pattern. For two days, he feigned illness. No one came. On three consecutive days he forced himself to forego the brief pleasure of the exercise yard, but no one appeared to urge him into the fresh air. Nobody, it seemed, was the least bit interested.

The girl was waiting by the fence on the last day on the month.

Garrity, walking out for his exercise period, spotted her and froze. For a moment he thought it was Tanya, but the length and colour of the hair were wrong. Something in his mind screamed at him to return to the safety of his cell, but curiosity and a terrible need drove him forward.

The girl watched him approach. More a woman than a girl really; late twenties perhaps. Pretty but pale, very pale. As Garrity

reached the wire, she spoke.

'You murdered my husband.'

'What?' Several seconds elapsed before understanding crashed into his mind.

'You murdered my husband.'

He stared at the woman incredulously, stared into the same brimming, hate-filled eyes that had followed his every move in the courtroom.

'What the hell's going on?' he managed at last. 'What do you want?'

'Want?' The pale lips twisted bitterly. 'I want you to know. Do you know?'

'Does it matter what I know?' he demanded. 'I'm in this bloody madhouse. Isn't that enough?'

'He was a good man.' The voice was soft, almost toneless, the eyes gazing now into the past. A kind man. He loved life, and children — and me.'

Garrity closed his eyes and leant against the wire as the ground tilted beneath his feet. 'Go away. Leave me alone, for Christ's sake!' He turned and fled back to his cell to collapse, trembling, on his bunk. Later he ventured a glance out of the window, but the woman was gone.

The days dragged past. During the second month he began devising means of escape. He tried jamming the lock while the door was open, to prevent it re-locking. That would only get him back into the yard, but at least it would be at a time of his own choosing. The sense of being manipulated was becoming oppressive. The plan failed — the door continued to become immovable the moment it closed. He tried digging his way out one evening, but the plaster floor broke both his knife and fork without taking a scratch and he had to eat with a spoon for the rest of the week. Strangest of all were the attempts he made to stay in the yard beyond his allocated time. He could not do it. As the end of the hour approached he was irresistibly drawn back. Fighting every inch of the way, he would retrace his steps and stagger exhausted into his cell, the door closing silently behind him. After one such episode, he lost his temper and smashed up the cell. The destruction brought some relief, but it occurred in the middle of the week and for three days he was forced to live amongst the wreckage. He was not quite certain

about his feelings when everything was miraculously restored overnight. He had given up trying to beat the sleep. It came over him at 21.00, no matter what he did. Once, he tried walking round talking to himself, reciting, reading aloud, but even as he was congratulating himself on staying awake, the room began to spin, and warm waves of darkness engulfed him.

For the next two months the woman appeared at the wire, but despite his craving for company Garrity could not face her. The snow came early that year, and he sat for hours watching the creamy flakes whirling past the window, grateful for the movement they brought to his static world. At the beginning of the Christmas week he found his normally plain fare supplemented by a frozen turkey dinner and two bottles, one of wine and one of whisky. The lonely meal brought back so many poignant memories of other Christmases that Garrity drank the wine and half of the whisky at one sitting, and put himself out of his misery for the rest of the day. On the last day of the year, there were two children waiting by the wire.

Garrity looked out across the snow, trembled, and remained indoors. He tried to read but the words were meaningless and after a while he threw down the book and took up his usual position by the window.

Presently, it began to snow.

The two figures receded into the dimness as the snow increased. Garrity cursed and looked at the clock: thirty-five minutes of the hour left. He wasted more time pacing the floor, then finally scooped up his jacket and marched out. The cold knifed savagely through his thin clothing.

The fence was almost invisible and he was upon it before he realised. Hooking his fingers into the wire he looked down at the children. They were boys, one aged about eight, the other younger — probably about six. The younger one was crying, but Garrity had to look closely before he was sure, for the tiny face was expressionless. Only the tears moved, coursing steadily down the pale cheeks.

'I murdered your father.' Garrity addressed the older boy as he opened his mouth to speak.

The boy nodded, never taking his eyes from Garrity's face. 'You

murdered our father.'

'Jesus Christ!' Garrity wrenched at the wire, dislodging feathers of powdery snow. His legs gave way and he crouched down, bringing his face almost level with that of the younger boy. The tears fascinated him. He wondered if they would freeze.

'We want you to know.'

Garrity swayed, then leaned into the fence, feeling the frozen wire branding his forehead.

'Do you know?'

'Do I?' His breath steamed through the wire as he hauled himself to his feet. 'Yes, son, I bloody know all right. I'm sorry about it too — but it's a bit late for that, isn't it?'

The little boy had stopped crying, but Garrity could feel the tears burning in his own eyes. 'He was a brave bloke, your dad — too brave. Hell, you'd have thought the money was his, not the bank's. I was in trouble, I needed it. Your dad went for his gun and I just...' He floundered, pulled himself up and looked down at the little boy. 'Take him away. He's cold. I'm sorry. Tell your mother that I'm sorry.'

He pushed himself away from the wire and staggered back across the yard, drawing the curtain of snow between himself and the accusing eyes. The urge to return to his cell was already upon him but he fought it, embracing the pain gratefully. The bitter cold tore at him and the tears were blinding so that he stumbled, shouting and sobbing, through a featureless world of grey. Within his head, the losing horses pounded out their harsh demands in sneers and threats, the once-familiar weapon roared and kicked, a woman screamed... Once, he came up against the wire, charged and tore at it until the snow was speckled with blood from his torn fingers. At 16.15 the darkness came, and with one final despairing cry, he pitched forward on his face in the snow.

He awoke at 7.00 on the following morning to find himself lying fully-clothed on his bunk. The snow had stopped falling and stillness had settled over everything once more. Mechanically he set about making breakfast, launching himself once more into the endless routine.

The seasons passed — years of seasons. Time lost its meaning, reduced itself to fourteen hour

stretches that were somehow dissipated in an endless procession of half-eaten meals, unfinished chess games and strangely familiar books. Neither the woman nor the children came again. Instead, Les came, or Garrity's brother — or Tanya. At the time, the meetings were tense, emotional or infinitely sad, but afterwards the details blurred, recollection became vague. Everyone spoke of old times and good times to come. The million questions that should have been asked and answered, all were forgotten as time played the final cruel trick and the precious hour flashed past.

The million questions that should have been asked and answered, all were forgotten as time played the final cruel trick and the precious hour flashed past'

The face in the mirror changed, gradually at first, then more obviously. The lines multiplied and deepened, the greyness crept upwards from Garrity's temples. The others changed too; Les growing steadily more morose, Tanya gaining a more mature beauty — but waiting, always waiting.

And the final day came.

There had to be a final day, and towards the end Garrity had dismissed many hours by losing himself in complex calculations designed to pinpoint the exact date. He succeeded only in confusing himself, and the day that should have seen his release dragged by, while he experienced every emotion from terror to wild exhilaration, finally sinking into grim despair when nothing occurred. He went to bed early, completely exhausted, and at 21.00 he slept.

Seconds later he was awake, staring up at a ceiling that was not his. Hauling himself up on one elbow, he glanced wildly around. Shelves of shining bottles winked back at him and he groaned as pain lanced through his skull.

'Ah! Jolly good, you're back with

us,' said a voice from the past, and a tall figure moved into Garrity's field of vision. Garrity gaped into the pale, bearded face. The pale, *unchanged*, bearded face.

'Touch of dizziness at first, I expect. Soon wear off. Any headache? Yes, that'll go too.'

Garrity stared at him blankly. He had finally cracked.

'Easy there, old man,' murmured Beard, as Garrity went rigid. 'Lot of big wheels'll want to talk to you. Can't have you wandering about all twitchy, can we? I've got something that'll sort you out. Here.'

Garrity took the glass, steadyng it with both hands.

'What's happening?'

Beard looked down at him. 'It's already happened, old man. You've just served a fifteen year sentence in —' he glanced at his watch, '— about three hours, forty minutes. 'Course, we'll have it to a tenth of a second on the old whirling machine.'

Dazed, Garrity became aware of the wires taped to his chest, the glittering machinery at his elbow. 'Fifteen years...?'

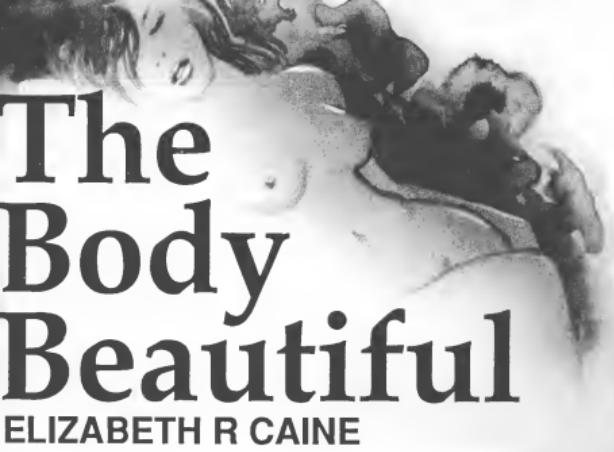
'All in the mind, old man. With a bit of help from drugs and auto-suggestion and hypnosis and lord knows what.'

'But the people — the children...!' Fifteen years of memories screamed through Garrity's mind. Memories — or dreams?

'That's what all the boffins'll want to hear about. How your mind treated you in all that time,' said Beard. 'You could be the first of many, you know. It's a pretty good system. Even when you know the truth, it still gets you. And it allows for a maximum sentence of thirty years.' He smiled a little grimly. 'Repeated at six hour intervals.'



HOWARD BAKER is a 43 year old former bookseller. He began writing ten years ago, working first as a technical journalist and then as an advertising copywriter. He is now a full time freelance writer producing material ranging from advertising copy to short stories. He has had four novels published, and holds a national poetry award.



The Body Beautiful

ELIZABETH R CAINE

There is a tyranny of beauty. I know that now. Some women worship at its altar, lay kisses at its feet. For most, there are foundations and creams, transforming oils and powders, with the power to light faces like sunsets; shaders and shadows to compensate for the falling of flesh, or to summon hollows beneath the cheek or at the temple when nature has failed them. But others step beyond the realm of the cosmetic, beyond the make up case and the blusher brush to a darker, more veiled place, where the flesh and the blade meet like uneasy lovers. A dark and bruising place, most would visit it only once or twice in a lifetime, perhaps to straighten the nose or lift the breasts when gravity pulls the curve from them; a few however, become so obsessed with their ideal self image that they become constant travellers to this other place, returning again and again after the bruises have healed, to have their flesh refined further. One or two, the rainbow chasers I call them, become surgical addicts.



Helena Strachen had left another message on my answerphone. She sounded more desperate than I can ever remember. Her voice was slurred though I couldn't tell whether alcohol or painkillers were the cause on this occasion; in the days prior to, and immediately following an operation, both were almost constant companions. I

always knew when she'd been back to the clinic as her visits were inevitably followed by her calling with an invitation to spend a few hours together talking over old times.

Sometimes, against my better judgement, I would go, and she would tell me about her latest operation in explicit detail, how much it had cost, how long it had taken, what it had felt like, what she had thought when the bandages were removed. None of which was of any interest to me. In fact it infuriated me. She had some aesthetic ideal in her head that I could neither see nor understand. It was five years since we split. I don't really know how it happened and I don't like to open old wounds and analyse it. We just grew in different directions I suppose, as lovers often do.

During those five years she had had, to my certain knowledge, six operations. It was December 1985, a few months after I had moved out, that Helena called me to tell me she had undergone a face lift operation. She said she'd decided to treat herself for her thirty-second birthday. She had always looked a good deal younger, possessing the kind of bone structure that most women would die for. Her skin was smooth and healthy with only the faintest of smile lines marking the passing of years. When she told me, I had been dumbstruck, not only because she was the last person who I would have thought of wanting surgery, let alone *needing* it, but also because she had always been careful with her money and I guessed that such an operation

seldom came in at less than £3,000.

At her request, we spent an awkward afternoon together, and I shall never forget how awful she'd looked that first time.

Her skin looked tight and tender and there were purple black bruises behind her ears and down her neck. She constantly massaged her cheeks and scalp as she talked. After two hours watching her fiddle incessantly, I told her to stop, and that's when she told me that she was completely numb and expected to be so for at least another month. We parted with me saying I'd call her in a few weeks to make sure she had got the feeling back. When I did so, her mother answered the phone and told me that Helena had gone into hospital to have silicone implants in her breasts.

I did not see the results of this operation until almost a year after that call. Since then she had been back to the clinic to have an operation on her nose. As I sat opposite her she told me how the bony bridge had been shaved down and some of the cartilage had been removed, this she said would straighten her nose which had previously been turned up and elfin, and which I had always thought to be tremendously attractive. It was difficult to tell how successful the surgery had been at that time because she was so swollen. The bridge of her nose ballooned across the left side of her face and the delicate skin below her eyes was a livid palette of scarlets, blues and ochre. Hers was a face worthy of Bacon.

'Let me show you my breasts,' she said matter of factly, beginning to unbutton her blouse. 'I'm very proud of them.' I had been looking, I'd be lying if I said I hadn't, at the jut of her nipples beneath the silk blouse; throughout our conversation they had been permanently erect. She slipped the garment from her shoulders and stood before me naked to the waist.

Her breasts were fuller than I remember them, and bore little resemblance to those I had held and caressed when we were lovers. They were too perfect, like those of the tabloid models she used to despise so much in our university days. They did not move correctly either, when she turned to her side to give me a profile they remained rigid. The scars were

barely noticeable, two thin crescents just below the aureoles were the only evidence of the surgery. She cupped one in her hand. 'Would you like to touch?' she asked. I refused, knowing that if I did as she asked, and one thing led to another, I might find myself back in her bed, and that if I did so it would be for the wrong reasons. I couldn't tell if she had meant it as an invitation, but she showed little sign of offence when I refused. Part of me had wanted to say yes, but I reasoned that it was that part of me that dwelt in the past. When our eyes met again she was buttoning up her blouse, all hint of intimacy gone.

The last time I had visited her we rowed terribly. She had moved out of the flat we had once shared and had taken a room in a large Victorian terraced house in one of the poorer areas of town, close to the docks. She told me she had decided that she no longer wanted to live alone, but I had always been able to tell when she was lying. I knew that she had moved because she could no longer afford to pay the mortgage. She had resigned from the law firm she had been with since leaving university, in order to devote more time to the obsessive refining of her looks. Without a sizeable salary behind her, the harsh price of her search for perfection had rapidly become apparent. By the time I saw her on that last occasion she was heavily in debt. The nose operation had been followed, over a two year period, with an eye lift, a lipoplasty and a tummy tuck, all of which had cost somewhere in the region of seven thousand pounds.

The first thing she said when we met was that she was going back to the clinic in a fortnight to have collagen injections to help plump out her laugh lines. She was still in a great deal of pain from the tummy tuck operation, and unlike the scars on her breasts, which were almost unnoticeable, this scar ran from hip to hip, and was wide and permanent. Her abdomen and thighs were severely bruised and swollen, although it was over four months since she had undergone the operation. I wondered if she had left sufficient time between the lipoplasty and the tummy tuck, or whether her skin was showing cumulative signs of tissue damage. I couldn't believe how ill and frail

she looked, at first I said nothing, and then my mouth and the wine we had been drinking got the better of me, and I told her I thought she needed help. She swore at me and told me she was getting to feel good about herself again, she told me I was overweight and unattractive, that I had let myself go to ruin, and I replied that I was at least in control, and that even if I was a little overweight I had come to terms with it and that I accepted myself for what I was. I told her I thought she was becoming obsessed, seeing deficiencies that were not there. She swore at me again. 'You want to know what I

and that they had been designed primarily to wound Helena, but I suppose there may have been a core of truth in what I said. Certainly she had always been at odds with the gay scene, keeping any outward signs of her sexuality firmly behind lock and key, and it was not too outrageous to assume that this self-inflicted repression was the cause of her reliance on aesthetic surgery.

However, shortly after the letter I received a phone call from Helena in which she told me a growth had been detected in one of her breasts, and that she was awaiting the results of tests to see if it was a carcinoma.

At the time I couldn't imagine the growth being anything worse.



**The bridge of
her nose
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and ochre'**

think?' I said at last, when I could contain my anger no longer. 'I know exactly why you're doing this.'

'Go on then, tell me,' she spat.

'You can't face up to your own sexuality. You've never been able to accept what you are.'

'Oh please!' She looked away, turning her eyes up to the ceiling.

'You've never seen yourself as a complete woman, so now you're trying to make up for it. Trying to become more of a woman than you were. But however much you change on the outside, you'll always see yourself as something freakish and dirty on the inside. Because you just can't accept what you are!'

It seemed my words had some effect, because three weeks later I received a letter from her saying that she did not plan to subject herself to any more surgery. I don't know whether she had ever thought of the psychological reasons for her dissatisfaction with her own body, but my explanation, cod Freud as it was, seemed to have got beneath her skin. I would be the first to admit that I had no factual basis for my accusations

I rewound the machine and let it play through again while I fixed myself a drink. There were several messages before Helena's, but then, at last, her voice again. She sounded strained. Strange even.

Her voice had a deeper timbre, almost gutteral. She did not say so, but I assumed from her tone, that the growth had been found to be cancerous. Her message consisted of six words, repeated over and over, each time a little more desperate than the last.

'Please... you have to see me.'

Ten minutes later, I was driving through the night to be with her.

It was a little after eleven when I arrived at the trailer park where she now lived. She had fallen out with the others at the house where she was staying, and had moved into a mobile home a little further down the coast. I guess the rents were fairly cheap in the winter months. Many of the trailers were dark and bordered on dereliction, those that were lived in all seemed to be at the back of the park where, on a clear day, they were afforded a sea view. It had started to rain and there was a stiff breeze blowing in off the ocean. Somewhere, someone had their television way too loud. I checked the number of Helena's mobile again, no easy task with only the spill from the other trailers for light.

I knocked at the door. Nothing. There was a light burning inside, and I thought I could hear a radio playing. Perhaps she hadn't heard me. I knocked again, harder this time. The wind picked up, rattling

the window in its frame. I made my way round, picking through the muddy puddles in the grass.

She had nets up, but there was enough light inside for me to see the outlines of her furniture... the television, an overstuffed armchair in front of it, a coffee table, the sofa. I almost missed seeing her legs, but when I did my insides flipped over.

I broke the glass with my bare hands, shredding them in the process. Seconds later, I was in the room. She was lying behind the sofa, naked in the half light.

Naked, so I could see her. I looked, screaming at the terribly twisted shapes of her head and breasts, the cauliflower mounds of her hips and belly, and prayed to God she was dead.

No living woman could deal with such perversions.



FICTION FILE 14

BRIAN LUMLEY



**Vampires with bite:
Brian Lumley, author of
the newly published
Deadspeak: Necroscope
IV, tells John Gilbert
how he defied horror
clichés to create some
awesome new
monsters.**

A major heart attack last year has done nothing to diminish Brian Lumley's zest for work. Probably one of the most prolific and admired British horror writers, he found real fame with the *Necroscope* series of novels, recreating the vampire mythos, and turning the ageing undead into contemporary monsters, worthy of the name. The latest of these is *Deadspeak*, and it also represents Brian's first major UK hardback launch. 'I wrote a mythos story a long time ago which involved a form of vampirism and the idea had boiled around in my head since then.'

He started writing the bestselling series six years ago, shortly after he settled to live in Devon. 'The typical vampire was just not the way I wanted vampires to be, so I constructed them. Once I had the character names and had looked up the locations I was going to use, I was ready to write the first book. By the time I got two-thirds of the way through it, Harry fascinated me and I knew that there would be too much left unsaid, and I would have to work it out.'

And the series took off.

Brian's *Necroscope* books mix vampirism with high tech ESP spying. The British use psychic skills to look at the Russians, and vice versa. But, with the thaw in Anglo-Russian relations, has the author changed his emphasis on the devious Reds? 'The emphasis was already changing in *The Source*, with talk about *perestroika*. Fortunately, it did come about. Remember that the Cold War was a hardware cold war and now they're withdrawing tanks. But how

many KGB officers are still there with a longing for Old Mother Russia? In fact, while I wasn't 100 per cent sure of *perestroika* while writing the book, I wasn't far off the mark.'

If that is the case, then maybe horror can be used in its own special way to foreshadow real events, particularly if you are writing about the real world... 'Horror in the real world can foreshadow, such as in *Silence Of The Lambs*. For instance, they recently picked up a man in the States who was wearing a belt of nipples. Writers do this in aftermath books, zombie novels where you have a bunch of survivors fighting against the odds.'

Apart from a collection of poetry, called *Ghoul Warning*, *Deadspeak* is Brian's first British hardback, yet he is nonchalant about the time it has taken to make the deal. 'We never pushed it. Also, unless the numbers of the hardback are going to be big, is it worth it to worry? If you manage to sell the paperback rights for good upfront money in the States then you can do two times as well with a publisher there than you can in this country.'

Not that he has to worry, and because of his rapid success with the horror thriller format he has enough work to take care of all his waking hours for the next two and a half years. First, there is a collection of short stories called *Fruiting Bodies And Other Fungi*, centring around his 1989 BFS award-winning story and published in the States by Tor. 'It includes some of my best horror stories for the last 20 years and will be about 90,000 words in length.'

Next up, an ambitious series called *Vampire World*, which takes the story of the Wamphyri into their Starside/Sunside habitat. 'It includes a history of the Wamphyri, starting where *Deadspawn* finishes. Then, a dramatic new chapter in the *Necroscope* series, *Dragosani*. It continues the story of the necromancer who tortured his dead victims in the first book and earned a very horrible death. Brian intends to headline the book. You just knew he'd be back.'

And no doubt the same holds true of its author.

ELIZABETH CAINE
lives in Clapham with her husband and two children. Now a full time housewife, her previous jobs include working as a dental technician and a short spell as a mortuary attendant in a Portuguese hospital.

PRIME EVIL SHORT STORY COMPETITION

FEAR publishes the first of the three winning entries.
Look out for the other winners in the next two issues!

STEVEN MATTHEWS

BREAKING UP

Gavin Armstrong was asleep when he broke his leg.

He woke screaming to the dark, an agonising pain in his right shin. Floundering for the bedside light, he knocked it off the cabinet. In his panic, he stumbled out of bed to reach the wall light switch. His leg folded oddly and he fell to the floor, the darkness flashing with phantom lights.

His leg had bent in the wrong place!

For a while he lay in sick shock on the floor, trying to make sense of the new joint in his leg. He must have been attacked. A burglar. Yes, that was it! An intruder had bro-

ken into his flat and attacked him. He lay a little longer, sure that the intruder must still be in the room with him, but he could hear nothing. Eventually, he dragged himself to the wall, and reached up to turn on the light.

There was no one else in the room. He grabbed the phone and managed to dial 999 before he lost consciousness.

'There's no sign of a blow,' the doctor at casualty told him when he had set Gavin's leg in plaster. 'It's the sort of fracture you might find if pressure had been exerted like — this.' He picked up a wooden spatula and bent it till it snapped. Gavin winced.

'And that doesn't tend to happen in bed, does it?'

The police were no help either. They could find no evidence of forced entry into Gavin's flat, nor there having been anyone but

Gavin in his bedroom. The detective sergeant's personal opinion was that Gavin had been involved in some sort of lover's tiff — with a very strong lover. Some people actually like that sort of thing. But he did not share this theory with Gavin, simply placing the papers on the case into the bottom of his 'in' tray back at the station.

Gavin was taking the bus to work, not being able to drive with his leg in plaster, when he broke his arm.

He had been thinking about the young woman with the red hair sitting in front of him when he noticed a sudden discomfort near his left wrist. He raised his arm and pulled his coat sleeve up to see what was the matter when he heard a crack. Then his hand was dangling lifelessly on the end of his wrist as if it no longer belonged to him. The sight was almost instant-

ly wiped out by a flood of pain and merciful blackness.

It was the same doctor at the casualty department. 'You are unfortunate,' he observed. 'Two fractures in as many weeks. How exactly did it happen? You were just sitting on a bus? I would advise you to stay in bed in future. Only...'

The doctor started to laugh, but Gavin was less than amused.

'I'm going to refer you to a bone specialist,' the doctor concluded, lamely.



Gavin did not break any more bones in the three weeks before his appointment with Dr Brewster.

'Well, there's no evidence of osteoporosis,' Dr Brewster told Gavin, smiling reassuringly. 'Not that I would expect it in a man of your age. Is there a history of brittle bones in your family?'

Gavin shook his head.

'I think I would like to conduct a few more tests. I'll make you an appointment — did you hear a noise?' the doctor said, looking up.

'I think it was my leg — my other leg,' Gavin was just able to say before he screamed.

Dr Brewster admitted Gavin to hospital straight away. Gavin had a nasty fracture of his left femur and couldn't very well be anywhere else. At least he was in the right place, Gavin thought. He couldn't come to much harm in hospital.

A few days later, Dr Brewster and a number of medical students were clustered around Gavin's bed discussing his case.

'Most unusual,' Dr Brewster observed. 'We appear to have a new syndrome. This patient's bones keep breaking, but we have so far been unable to find a satisfactory explanation. His bone structure is perfectly normal, he has strong and healthy bones. We are currently investigating the possibility of muscle spasms producing the injuries described. You — what's the literature on that?'

The chosen medical student looked momentarily flustered. She had not been paying full attention to Gavin's unusual case, thinking instead of the recipe for that evening's dinner.

'Well, er...' she began. Her gaze settled on Gavin's face, and for a moment she saw the person behind the condition. She looked away

quickly. Muscle spasms can quite frequently cause stress fractures, during epileptic fits, for example, or as the result of electrocution, Er, Pearson et al, in, er, 1967...'

A loud snap interrupted her train of thought. The sound had come from the patient.

One of Gavin's ribs had broken.

There was silence as the medical students reluctantly looked down at him, forcibly confronted with the inexplicable. Their training so far had largely inured them to horrors. They had routinely cut, sliced, sawn, ripped and generally abused slightly decomposing cadavers for hours at a time, before going off for a hearty lunch. Accident victims? All in a day's work. Severed limbs, punctured eyeballs? I wonder what's on TV tonight.

'There was another crack as a second rib went. One of the students was sick over Gavin's foot'

But none of it had prepared them for the sheer unexpectedness of a man whose bones break audibly before their eyes while he is lying quietly in a hospital bed.

There was another crack as a second rib went. One of the students was sick over Gavin's foot. Three of them fled the room. One just sat down in a corner and fainted.

'A nurse,' Dr Brewster said indistinctly, aware that he was not in control. 'Get a nurse, somebody. Are you all right, Mr — heh, heh — Armstrong?'

But Gavin did not reply. He, too, had passed out, so he did not hear the noise of the third rib going, nor see the remaining students leave hurriedly, all of them suddenly wondering if their bleepers were perhaps not working, and that maybe they were being paged and did not know it.

Gavin concluded that he was safer at home. As soon as he had his ribs strapped up, he insisted on being discharged. The consultant protested, but not as much as he might have done. Gavin was a liability to any hospital. Think of the lawsuits! Dr Brewster ordered the ambulance himself.

When the ambulance had

carried Gavin up the stairs, placed him in a wheelchair in the middle of his living room, and shut his front door behind them, he poured himself a tumbler of whisky with some difficulty and swallowed half of it in one gulp.

What was happening to him? What exactly was happening to him? So far he had broken both legs, one arm, and was it three or four ribs? Sweat suddenly oozed from his forehead and he drank the rest of the whisky, refilling his glass immediately.

There was a small click as a bone in his right big toe snapped neatly in two. With a sense of urgency he drank down a new glass of whisky, filled it up again, and despite the tears running down his cheeks, polished that off too. He drained the bottle into the glass and clutched it in his good hand, not knowing how much longer he would have the ability to do so.

He was breaking up, falling apart, his separate bodily constituents divorcing themselves. Another rib split, pressing down against his lung. It wasn't fair! Had he been so wicked in his life that he deserved this?

A series of small pops, like the sound of distant gunfire, filled the room as more bones shattered. He lost his grip on the glass and the remains of the whisky poured down his front. It wasn't fair! He would have shouted out his despair if his jaw hadn't chosen that moment to fracture tidily down the cleft in his chin.

Gavin slumped in the wheelchair, trying not to sob, afraid that the jagged ends of his ribs would perforate his lungs. He prayed. Then his bones began their percussive rhythm in earnest, clicks, snaps and cracks emanating from a vertebra one moment, a kneecap the next, now from a finger and then from his skull.

The sounds stopped after a couple of minutes. At first he thought his body had ceased its rebellion, then dimly realised that it was simply because the stirrups and the cochlea in his inner ears had shattered. The disintegration continued, shudders and ripples passing through his flesh, his body slowly settling into a homogenous pulp only held together by his skin and the plaster casts.

His last coherent thought was: are there 206 bones in the human body, or 207?



A PROBLEM OF DISPOSAL

DUNCAN ADAMS



How ironic it was that I should be sitting behind a desk at Pilgrim's major space port under these circumstances. As a child, I had marvelled at the stories of how the founding fathers had set out in their tiny spacecraft, and how they had established this far-flung bastion of humanity. How they had put the insanity of Earth behind them, escaped the threat of nuclear holocaust, and set up a hi-tech society where a Christian God ruled supreme.

Ironic? It was *they* who had had the nuclear war, and it was *they* who had almost annihilated themselves, while we on Earth had found a sort of peace.

'Major Peters reporting, sir!' The man stood smartly to attention, snapping me from my reverie.

'Just got in?' I asked, waving him into a chair.

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'Yes, colonel. Me and three troopers.'

'Only three? For the entire capital?'

'Yes, sir. They said to recruit local labour.'

'Yes, I know the score,' I said wearily, glancing at the geiger counter on the desk, then popping another Hard-Rad tablet into my mouth. I offered him the bottle and he took one nervously, his Adam's apple struggling to help it down.

'It's fallen to fifteen centigrays,' I said, nodding towards the counter. It was almost thirty when I arrived.'

'Still bloody lethal, sir. How are the population, radiation-wise?'

'Not good. Only ten per cent had supplies of Hard-Rad, so most of those who survived the blasts are either dead or dying.'

'And are any officials living, colonel?'

'Of course!' The surprise probably showed on my face — it was a stupid question. 'All safely tucked up in a bunker with food and Hard-Rad tablets. That's your first job, Major: I want you to assemble them for a briefing. Let's get this show on the road!'

Only the archbishop was absent from the meeting, apparently having urgent business elsewhere. The mayor and a dozen officials sat nervously in front of me, opened bottles of tablets in their hands, their eyes constantly glancing at their watches, timing the doses precisely.

'How many men have you got?' asked the mayor, breaking the uneasy silence.

'Just over a thousand of us have come from Earth,' I replied. 'We're deployed over the entire planet, and you've got five of us...'

'Only five! That's preposterous!'

'Look,' I shouted, my anger rising unchecked. 'Seven days ago you fought the first all-out nuclear war in the history of mankind. It took you just half an hour to declare peace, then call on Earth for help. Have you any idea what it costs to send a thousand men faster-than-light? Not just *any* men, men trained to handle exactly this kind of emergency! And what have you been doing in the meantime? Sitting on your fat arses, that's what you've been doing!'

'But there's the radiation...'

'Bollocks, you've got the tablets!'

The man fell silent, tugging at his collar and looking unhappy.

'My job is to get this city back on its feet,' I said more gently. 'Right now we need information, and between you I think you've probably got it. What was your popula-

tion when war broke out?"

"About five million."

"And how many survivors?"

"We don't know."

"Guess, man. I don't expect you to take a bloody census!"

"Maybe fifty thousand."

"Jesus," whistled Major Peters. A sharp glance silenced him.

"And of those, only ten per cent had Hard-Rad?"

"Yes."

"So you'll have about five thousand fit people, of whom perhaps only one or two thousand will be able to provide useful labour?"

"Yes, I guess that's right," the mayor admitted.

I scribbled a few figures on the paper in front of me, crossed them out, tried again, and made my final assessments.

"Right, this is what we do," I announced with far more confidence than I felt. "Major Peters, I want all the able-bodied men rounded up. Arm a hundred of them and place them under trooper Hertzog — he's in charge of food and shelter. No food is to be given to anyone who hasn't been taking Hard-Rad unless there's an obvious surplus. Trooper Spence is to have

'For a moment I had a mental image of her lying amongst the corpses, her robes around her waist, legs parted, clutching her bible as I descended on her'

another hundred men, and he's in charge of public health and medicine. Strict triage, of course..."

"What's 'triage?'" the mayor interrupted.

"We divide the sick and injured into three groups," said trooper Spence as I nodded to him to explain. "The first group are those who'll probably die, whatever we do, the second are those who'll probably survive if we do nothing, and the third are those in between. We only treat the third group — the others are a waste of resources."

"Trooper Ackerman will take another hundred men," I continued before the mayor could protest.

"He'll take charge of public works, water, sewerage, electricity etc. Major Peters, you take two hundred men and deal with law and order. Don't bother shooting looters, but protect the food stocks, water supplies and our own space craft. Get to it, men."

A few smart salutes later I was left with the mayor and his silent colleagues. "What about the rest of the workers?" he asked. "You said there could be a couple of thousand, but you've only found jobs for five hundred."

"They'll work under me," I said slowly. "I've got the worst job of all — disposal of the dead."



The archbishop would like to see you, colonel," said Paul Hanson, the survivor I had selected to be my second-in-command. He was an engineer, and since he knew where to find all the bulldozers in the city, he was the logical choice. I hadn't yet met the head of the Pilgrim Church of God, and it was a meeting for which I had no relish, yet I knew it had to be done.

"Send him in," I muttered.

He proved to be a 'she', and I must have looked astonished as she swept into the room, bible clutched in left hand and right extended in greeting. I seldom bothered rising to shake hands, but I found myself on my feet reaching across the desk as I clasped the young flesh. How old was she? She looked about twenty-five, but she couldn't be that young. I stared into her face, almost rudely, looking for tell-tale lines, but not finding any.

"I'm thirty-two," she said. "And you're right, I am rather young."

"I'm sorry," I stammered as I dashed around the desk to sweep a chair beneath her. Could she read minds?

"Only a little," she said as I sank back into my own chair. It's more a case of guessing what people are thinking by the circumstances and their body language, than by actual mind-reading."

"Good Lord," I stammered.

"He is indeed," she smiled. "But not recently, I fear. The Lord Satan has waved his hand across our planet. Sodom and Gomorrah are upon us."

"Quite!" I struggled to regain my composure. "What exactly can I do for you...er...?"

"Call me Heather — that's my given name."

"So what can I do for you, Heather?"

"I understand you're using bulldozers. Just pushing the bodies into holes, then covering them with soil."

"Yes, but not for much longer," I said, still studying her beautiful features. "There's hardly any fuel left, and they need it for food distribution..."

There must be no more of these barbaric burials," she snapped. "I insist on proper funerals..."

"You're joking!" I regretted the choice of words immediately — it was anything but a joking matter.

"I want to see every corpse myself, and I want to bless them."

"It doesn't work like that," I protested. "You've got nearly five million dead, but that doesn't mean you've got five million bodies. You've got hundreds of millions of bits, and about two million intact bodies. It's bucket and shovel work, mostly. But in truth most of them are going to have to be left to rot — there's no labour force, you see..."

"So why the bulldozers?"

"To clear the parts of the city that weren't flattened by the missiles. We need to re-establish a semblance of normality, and that means clearing areas like Schweitzerville of all its bodies."

Mention of Schweitzerville seemed to cause her mood to change, and she became pensive for a moment. She looked down into her flowing green and crimson robes, and I had a few seconds to search the folds for signs of the body concealed beneath it. Was her figure as exquisite as her face?

She changed her posture, still not looking at me, but allowing her breasts to reshape the soft fabric. Was she reading my mind again? Were the clergy completely celibate? Would it be possible to get her into bed? My pulse was racing as I considered the insane thought, made all the more lunatic by the crazy circumstances under which I had met her. For a moment I had a mental image of her lying amongst the corpses, her robes around her waist, legs parted, clutching her bible as I descended on her.

"I can't allow it," she said, her eyes suddenly on me again.

"I...I..."

"No," she smiled at my embarrassment. "I wasn't referring to the

garbage in your mind. I mean I can't allow you to dispose of the dead like this.'

'What garbage?' I demanded, determined to regain control of the interview. 'You don't read minds — you just guess. You've no idea what I was thinking!'

'You desire me,' she said dismissively, as though it meant nothing. 'Forget it, colonel! What are we going to do about the bodies?'

'Let me tell you the facts of life,' I said, straightening myself in my chair and trying to be a colonel again. 'If you've studied history, you'll know of the destruction of Dresden in 1945 during the Second World War. Only a hundred and thirty five thousand died, but they

"Sometimes we have to make great sacrifices for God," she said softly. 'I could give up my celibacy, if it meant more souls could go to Him"

couldn't dispose of them. And they were far better off in Dresden than we are: they used Ukrainian prisoners of war from nearby camps, but they just couldn't handle the volume. They used the railway station as a collection point, stacking bodies on the lines in piles twenty yards square and ten feet high. Yet a fortnight later, a man walking through the Grosser Garten recorded that he had to clear a path through the corpses so he could pass.'

'I had cremation in mind,' she said smoothly, clearly unaffected by what I had hoped would sicken her — make her more human and approachable.

'They tried that in Dresden,' I continued. 'But they could only burn nine thousand a day, and they had a massive work force by our standards...'

'We have God on our side. Our survivors will work hard and willingly.'

'But what you *haven't* got is fuel,' I insisted. 'The ideal size of a pyre is fifteen hundred bodies, just big enough to use the body fat itself as fuel, but not too big to handle. Have you any idea how much fuel

is needed to get it going?'

She shook her head slowly.

'Four hundred railway sleepers, two hundred and fifty bales of straw, ninety tons of coal, or a thousand old car tyres. We don't even begin to have the resources.'

'The less-damaged areas then.'

'Yes,' I sighed. 'Schweitzerville is possible, and so are a few other places. But mostly we've got to abandon the bodies.'

'And you'll arrange it so I can see each one, and bless them?'

'I'll do my best,' I grudged.



I hardly slept that night for thinking of the strange archbishop. Sure, I'd had plenty of women, even been married for a while, and I was old enough not to be disturbed by pure lust alone. But that damned woman haunted me. So beautiful, and so unattainable. The image of making love amongst the corpses persisted, troubling me throughout the long night, and leaving me strangely disturbed the following morning.

I gave orders I should not have given, and placed too great a burden on my second-in-command, but I managed to arrange the following day so as to leave myself completely free. I had decided that God was important, and that I should devote my time to assisting the archbishop in the performance of her duties.

We met on the outskirts of Schweitzerville, a village just beyond the main conurbation of the capital. The nearest missile had been half megaton and had air-bursted about ten miles away. There was only superficial damage to most of the structures, but refugees from the capital had fought pitched battles in its streets, their conflict spreading the disaster into places it would not otherwise have reached.

Over seventy five per cent of the population were dead already, and more would die as the radiation sickness wasted them away — it was far too late for Hard-Rad to help them now. The air was full of the stench of diarrhoea and decay, and the hot alien sun seemed to be cooking a devil's meal beneath its dust. Dust blew in the streets as Heather declined the respirator I offered her; it seemed that like myself she was already accustomed to the stink, and a respirator

would just be an encumbrance.

'Take your Hard-Rad?' I asked. 'It's still nearly thirty centigrams here.'

She just nodded, the hot wind pressing her flimsy robe tightly against the slender, though rounded, body. My pulse quickened again, and the same irrational thoughts of bedding her flooded through me. I wanted to ask her to let me buy her dinner when we finished our work, but it was a lunatic, stupid thought. There were neither restaurants nor appetites.

Instead, I took her to the funeral pyres, and she watched as the corpses were dragged, pitched or dumped upon them, splashing droplets of what I assumed were holy water and muttering strange words over them. After some while, I realised she studied every male face, but showed little interest in the dead females. It was soon apparent that she was looking for someone. Eventually, I voiced my curiosity, but she shrugged me off, declining to answer.

When they fired the first pyre of the day, we *had* to put on the respirators, for black smoke came from the rubber tyres, then choking, nauseating fumes from the spluttering body fats. Just after noon, when she was clearly exhausted, I tried to persuade her to rest, but she would have none of it. It was becoming dark as the last of the day's pyres was lit.

'We're running out of fuel,' I told her as we drove back to the space port where I had made my headquarters in the Administrator's luxury flat. 'We won't be able to burn many more.'

'So what will you do?'

'Can't you read my mind?'

'I don't think you know yourself.' The tiredness sounded in her voice, but she was right — I hadn't a clue. But it gave me an opportunity I wasn't going to miss.

'So spend the evening with me,' I said, trying not to sound over-eager. 'Let's try to plan together.'

'God will help us find an answer,' she agreed, clutching the bible closely to her breast.



We ate very little, but I was surprised when she accepted several glasses of wine rescued from the undestroyed space port bar. I was less surprised when she said she

wanted to take a bath, and although water was a precious commodity, it seemed appropriate that an archbishop should be permitted the luxury. I carried the water from the main tank myself, apologising it was cold, but she said it would be welcome even if freezing. I closed the bathroom door on her, then sat quietly in the dead Administrator's armchair, watching the crystal mobiles tinkling by the window, and imagining what the archbishop looked like without her clothes.

I almost found out, for when she emerged she was clad only in a towel.

'I washed my robes,' she said, either reading my mind or my expression. 'They're hanging out of the window to dry.'

Her dark hair was still wet, and there was no means of drying it, so it lay like sheets of damp satin on her flawless shoulders. A trickle of water ran down the inside of her leg, appearing at her knee where the towel ended; perhaps it had been trapped in some secret place when she dried herself, and had only now been liberated.

'Satan is in your mind,' she said seriously. 'You should put away thoughts of the flesh, colonel. We are surrounded by death and misery. Our task is to send these departed souls to God with dignity. We must plan for it. That is why I agreed to come here.'

'Yes,' I said, moving away from her to collect the bottle of spirits, not unlike earth's brandy, and to avoid her searching gaze. She accepted the glass when I handed it to her.

'So what will you do?' she asked. 'About the rest of the bodies?'

I sat in the armchair again, and she sat opposite me, making me acutely aware she wore nothing but the towel, and that her legs were slightly parted. She smiled at me, sipped her drink, then repeated the question.

'There are half a dozen areas like Schweitzerville,' I replied. 'But we're going to have to abandon most of them. We just don't have the fuel...'

'I must bless the bodies.'

'Perhaps you could go into the villages, and bless them where they lie. Better to be blessed than rot, than not be blessed at all.'

'I need your workers to bring them to me... otherwise it takes too long. Besides, I want as many cre-

mated or buried as possible.'

Was it my imagination, or had her legs moved a little farther apart? Was she making an invitation?

'Colonel,' she said sternly, firmly closing her legs and pulling down the towel. 'Your mind is a cesspit.'

'No, I...'

'You were *staring*, colonel. I don't need to read your thoughts. Can't you get it into your head that I'm celibate? Forget it!'

'You're very beautiful...'

'Made in the image of God, that's all. What about the bodies, colonel?'

'There's enough fuel for a few dozen more pyres,' I said, reaching for the bottle and refilling our glasses. 'Enough to complete Schweitzerville, but after that, I think we've finished.'

'There's a valley ten miles away,' she said thoughtfully. 'It has very steep sides, and if you stacked the bodies in it, you could blast the sides down to bury them.'

'No good,' I shook my head. 'We haven't got the fuel for the trucks...'

'Yes we have. I overheard Major Peters saying he'd found another dump.'

'We need it for other tasks: distribution of food, repairing the damaged services, law and order. Disposal of the dead is less important.'

She looked at me very hard then. Her eyes sparkled as she deliberately allowed her legs to fall apart again. 'Sometimes we have to make great sacrifices for God,' she said softly. 'I could give up my celibacy, if it meant more souls could go to Him.'

'Is that an offer?' I asked, my voice husky and shaking.

'You know it is,' she replied seriously. 'Fill that valley for me, let me bless them all, and yes, I will sacrifice myself to you, colonel. If that's what it takes.'



I spent another sleepless night wrestling with my thoughts. Why was I so besotted? Could it be love? Could I finally, after so long, actually be in love? But no, I knew it was pure lust, but lust unlike any I had ever known before. Colonels grow out of self-control, and rank such as mine is denied to all but the most stable of men. Yet here I

was, planning to undermine the restructuring of the planet's capital, just so I could screw its archbishop! Madness! Total madness! Yet I knew I would do it.

Major Peters had argued with me, but I had convinced him the religious convictions of the planet over-rode everything else. Heather and I stood together in the valley as the mountain of corpses grew even higher, and her search became more and more frantic. Yet she wouldn't confess she was looking for anyone in particular. Always she contended that each was created in God's image, and each must be treated the same. I knew she was lying, but I didn't really care. All that mattered was that we filled the valley, and I took her to bed.

The pile was nine hundred yards long, sixty yards wide, and ten yards high when she found what she was looking for. The man was a priest of lowly rank, unrecognisable save for his robes, as his head had been sliced in two. But Heather knew him, and the expression of relief on her face told me immediately that her long search was over. I almost missed the swift movement as she reached into his cassock, and drew something from around his neck. I didn't see what it was, but it was quickly hidden in her voluminous pocket. I dismissed the incident, thinking it was a crucifix, or some other artifact.

She knew that I had seen what she had done, and it was then she stopped her pretence. 'I think the valley's full,' she announced. 'Perhaps this is the time to fill it in.'

She led me away even before they blasted down the sides.



And now you will want your payment,' she said as she emerged from the bathroom, this time without even the towel.

I was too full of desire to reply, and I let her lead me into the bedroom. There were no overtures to her love-making, no soft caresses or kisses, no sweet murmurings of love, nor hint of passion in her eyes. She had a price to pay, and she wanted it dealt with swiftly.

With lust alone, I mounted her. Her flesh felt icy, straight from the cold water. Chilled thighs hardly gripped me as I sank into her, and her face froze frigid. But I had

earned my payment, and I intended taking it, however unwilling she may be.

As my hips moved, savouring her, the same awful vision of copulating with her amongst the corpses surfaced in my mind. I closed my eyes, but the image became stronger, so I opened the magain, forcing myself to stare at her breasts, holding myself away from her, but still moving inside her.

A maggot forced itself from her nipple and I shook my head, struggling to free it of the hallucination. Symptoms like this had been reported at Dresden, and it was a common psychosis associated with the disposal of the dead. The maggot rolled down her breast, disappearing in the region of our joined genitals. Another began to emerge, this time from the other nipple, and I felt nauseated. I began to go limp inside her.

'Hurry up,' she complained, obviously realising I was in difficulties, and not wishing to prolong her misery. She moved her own hips then, speeding me towards my end.

I looked away from her breasts, into her face. Maggots seethed in her eyes, worms slithered in her mouth, and something black and long-legged darted into her nose. Put refying arms reached out, pulling me towards her as her hips quickened and she began to gasp with some pleasure of her own.

I looked away from her as her fingernails raked my back, but the sheets had become a sea of corpses, seething with under currents of the same maggots that infested her eyes. She convulsed briefly in a parody of an orgasm, then thrust me away from her, unsatisfied and uninterested, my lust lost in the seas of horror.

'You fool!' she shrieked at me, her laughter as insane as the image of the corpses that persisted in my vision. 'Who do you think I am?'

My stomach heaved as I began to realise things weren't quite what they seemed, and that the hallucinations were just a touch too real.

'Why do you think you lusted for me?' she cackled. 'I seeded your mind with lewd thoughts, that's why! The great colonel besotted!

I tried to rise from the bed, but she rose with me, pushing me down amid the corpses, her leprous body holding me there.

'Why do you think war broke out

on this planet? Have you never asked yourself how it happened?'

She pressed her lips to mine and I felt the worms on her tongue. 'God was becoming too strong here,' she sneered. 'So Satan sent me, his daughter, to cripple this world. I and my brother sowed the discontents.'

'The priest,' I gasped as she pressed down on me, her flesh putrid and oozing from a thousand decaying sores.

'My brother misjudged the timing. He fled the city just before the first missile, but he was unable to join me in time for us to make our escape. It was he who had the teleporter, and without it I was unable to escape to my own world. That was why I had to find him.'

'And now you have it,' I moaned, remembering how she had slipped something into her pocket.

'Indeed I have!' she leaped suddenly from the bed, and I sat up quickly, preparing to make my escape from the nightmare.

But already it had evaporated. A beautiful, naked woman stood gazing at me, her eyes full of the joys of a painlessly shed virginity. The bedclothes were as white and unsullied as when we had started, save for a few drops of blood from her maidenhead, long overdue.

'Perhaps I sinned,' she said softly. 'I loved my brother so much. We grew up with God together. When I learned he had managed to flee the city, I had to find his body. I gave him this crucifix for his birthday — was it so wrong of me to want it as memento?'

I shook my head in an attempt to clear it. God or the Devil? Reality or hallucination? Anyway, teleportation was impossible, wasn't it?

'I can no longer be archbishop,' she said sadly. 'And yet this world needs me. I have thrown everything away for the love of my brother. I am no longer celibate.'

Tears began slow passage down her cheeks, and I slipped to her side, wiping them away with my thumbs. We stood close, our bodies touching, and I began to feel my manhood rising, reminding me how I had emerged from the experience unsatisfied.

'If you want me again, I think I'd like it,' she said softly, her lips nuzzling my shoulder.

'No,' I said, perhaps a little too quickly. 'Maybe somewhere else... well away from this charnel house... I think I've been hallucin-

"You fool!" she shrieked at me, her laughter as insane as the image of the corpses that persisted in my vision. 'Who do you think I am?"

nating... it happened to the workers in Dresden.'

I slumped onto the edge of the bed, and she moved to stand in front of me. My eyes fixed on her perfect breasts, but no maggots wriggled from them. I think I love you,' I said uncertainly. 'Come back to Earth with me, Heather.'

'My place is here,' she said hesitantly. 'There's a world to rebuild. I've been very foolish, giving away so much for the memory of a dead brother. Not only my celibacy, but all that fuel that could have been used more wisely... and... seducing you was wicked. I've given so much to this world, and I thought it would be all right if I took a little back. But I was wrong, and I'm ashamed.'

'Come back to Earth with me,' I implored again. 'This world is dead. You did your best, but Satan has won here.'

Just for a moment, at the mention of Satan's name, the maggot writhed in her eyes again, then they were replaced by a distant yearning.

'Persuade me,' she smiled, pulling me back onto the bed.

'Not here,' I said as I wriggled free of her. 'I can't make love on this planet, not even with you.'

'Then perhaps I would like to come to Earth with you.'

'Let's not rush into it, Heather,' I said, still not certain exactly who or what she was, and whether I was hallucinating, and if so, which experience was the reality.

'Fuck you then,' she snarled, then reached behind her, picked up the teleporter, pressed a button, and vanished.



DUNCAN ADAMS is a prolific short story writer whose work has appeared in *Fantasy Tales*, *Scanner Works*, *New Visions*, *Dreamweaver* and *Nova Science Fiction*, among many others. This is his third story to appear in FEAR. Mr Adams lives in Clwyd, North Wales.

FEAR REVIEWS

Not To Be Missed



Recommended



Fair



Poor



Diabolical



CINEMA AND VIDEO



HORROR

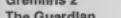
Bad Dreams



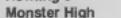
Basketcase 2



Carnival Of Souls



Cold Light Of Day



The Grandmother



Gremlins 2



The Guardian



Howling 5



Monster High



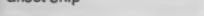
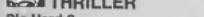
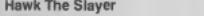
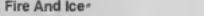
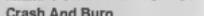
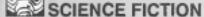
Rockula



Troll 2



Zoltan... Hound Of Dracula



THE RIFT (aka LA GRIETA)

Starring Jack Scalia, J Lee Ermy, Ray Wise, Deborah Adair
Director Juan Piquer Simon
Distributor Warner Bros
Cert 15

 A by-the-numbers Spanish submarine adventure, whose belated entry into the cycle initiated by *The Abyss*, *Deepstar Six* and *Leviathan* only serves to emphasise its redundancy. Like its predecessors, it

mostly refloats ideas familiar from sci-fi pics set in space, with the refinement here that almost every idea has been stolen from James Cameron's influential body of work.

When a state-of-the-art nuclear-powered submarine goes missing near the deep Dannekin Rift, the craft's hunky designer, Vick Hayes (Scalia), is blackmailed by Comte's scheming supremo into joining a NATO search team on board Siren Two. Under the command of their hard-ass captain, the multi-ethnic crew track Siren One's

'black box' signal to a vast underwater cavern populated by mutant life forms, apparently the result of government-backed biological warfare experiments. Pretty soon, the toxic seaweed hits the fan and the crew are faced by monsters without and an enemy within.

Among the more obvious borrowings are the corporation's on-board conspirator (Aliere) and the big mother monster (*Aliens* again), while just about everything else (including the involvement of submarine designer Hayes, and his and Rowley's spiky

romance-with-a-past) is simply lifted wholesale from *The Abyss*. The characterisation is predictably shallow and the romantic interest distinctly soggy, while the model work and creature effects plumb new depths of ineptitude. Director J P Simon maintains the standard set by his previous effort, a risible adaptation of Shaun Hutson's horror novel *Silugs* (released in this country on video only).

Nigel Floyd



CARNIVAL OF SOULS

Starring Candace Hilligoss, Sidney Berger, Frances Felt
Director Herk Harvey
Distributor Palace

 The inspiration for George Romero's *The Night Of The Living Dead*, Harvey's first and only feature, shot for \$30,000 in 1962, has, like its main protagonist, been resurrected from its uncut form. Consigned on its initial release to the lower half of drive-in double bills, *Carnival Of Souls* is, in essence, an extended version of *The Twilight Zone* spaced out on acid, a haunting, nightmarish vision that taps some primal source, plunging the viewer into a disturbing state of existential terror which persists long after the film's conclusion.

Mary (Hilligoss), a church organist, mysteriously survives a car crash in which her two fellow passengers perish, only to find herself haunted by visions of a ghoul-like figure and plagued by a series of dreamlike experiences, inexplicably linked to an abandoned carnival.

From the strangely tilted angle of the opening credits, through to the mesmeric dream sequences which skilfully blur the boundaries of fantasy and reality in dizzyingly demented and chillingly paranoid fashion, it is obvious that this is something special. Harvey's twisted imagery, stark black and white photography and off-kilter camerawork reveal a truly warped perspective and a disturbing sense of the surreal.

■ This month's recipe is GREMLIN in Pasta Sauce.

BANANAS

GREMLINS 2

Starring Zach Galligan, Phoebe Cates, Christopher Lee, John Glover
Director Joe Dante
Distributor Warner Bros
Cert PG

 Six years after directing the tightly plotted *Gremlins*, Joe Dante returns to his most successful subject matter with an anarchically chaotic affair, which rapidly abandons all semblance of narrative coherence, and ascends (or descends, depending on your point of view) into a series of disconnected, rapid-fire sight gags and self-referential silliness.

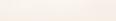
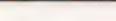
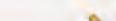
Having moved from the hicksy surroundings of Kingston Falls to the thrivily competitive hub of Manhattan, Billy (Zach Galligan) and his prissy girlfriend Kate (Phoebe Cates) find themselves in the employ of Daniel Clowes (John Glover), whose consumerist empire is responsible for such atrocities as the colourisation of *Casablanca*. Through the most shamelessly contrived and slender of plots, the newly orphaned Gizmo winds up in the scalpel-happy hands of Dr Catheter (Christopher Lee, in

fine comic form) whose animal research laboratory 'The Splice Of Life' carries out covert and sinister genetic experiments for the Clamp Organisation.

Rescued by Billy from imminent dissection, the marauding mogwai is soon taking an impromptu shower, and before you can say 'don't get them wet' and 'don't feed them after midnight', Gizmo has given birth to a skyscraper full of deranged beasties. From there on, cinematic pandemonium reigns as little green creatures play perverse tribute to *Marathon Man*, Hollywood musicals, TV talk shows and Sylvester Stallone, destroying all about them in a media-driven orgy of indulgence.

As the in-jokes continue to fly thick and fast, *Gremlins 2* collapses into insanely self-reflexive surrealism, as Leonard Maltin pops up to trash the video release of *Gremlins 1*, and the fleshly beasties hijack the projection booth for their own foul ends, bringing the entire proceedings to an unexpected halt. With an incisively witty script which almost compensates for the total absence of plot, this bizarrely cracked sequel demonstrates that despite mainstream acceptance, Dante is still bananas enough to go out on the slenderest of limbs if the fancy takes him. Weird.

Mark Kermode



inducing a mood of unerring menace and alienation. Even the undead herein are not the lurching flesh-crazed types that populate Romero's work, rather they are lost souls working in unison to reunite themselves with one of their own.

Harvey's movie has worn well; a work of genius from a director who shamefully never ventured further with the feature form. While many may read deeper socio- and psychological meanings into May's plight, metaphors and allegories aside, this, even today, is capable of unnerving the most stout of heart. Recommended.

Mark Salisbury



THE GRANDMOTHER

Director David Lynch

Distributor Palace



As a taster to the release of *Wild At Heart*, David Lynch's *The Grandmother* is showing with *Carnival Of Souls* at the ICA in London for two weeks, beginning August 24.

Filmed immediately prior to *Eraserhead*, *The Grandmother* flies headlong into stylised surrealism as Lynch shifts between five action, paintings, animation and pixilation to create a dazzling, disturbing and distorted vision of a tortured child, rejected by his parents, seeking emotional warmth and comfort by growing an imaginary grandmother from a seed in the attic. While he deals with emotions and mental states of mind that are fundamentally human, Lynch has his cast acting on an animalistic impulses. Very, very strange.

Mark Salisbury



DIE HARD 2: DIE HARDER

Starring Bruce Willis, Bonnie Bedelia, William Atherton, William Sadler

Director Renny Harlin

Distributor Twentieth Century Fox

Cert 18

"How can the same shit happen to the same man twice?" Bruce Willis' boy's back for what amounts to little more than *Die Hard* in an airport. It's Christmas time again, and while waiting for his wife's flight to land at a snowbound Washington airport, John McClane (Willis) becomes embroiled in a plot to intercept the extradition of a drug-dealing Central American dictator by an elite team of special forces terrorists led by former US Army Colonel Stuart (Sadler) who has hijacked the airport's air traffic control system, killing the runway lights and holding a dozen or more inbound aircraft to ransom. McClane's wife's plane is one of those stacking up in the capital's skies, its fuel running perilously low. Our hero defies the army's and airport police's advice to leave it to them, and with predictably destructive results, using the airport's system of underground tunnels and airducts, he continually thwarts the terrorists' every move.

Screenwriters Steven E de Souza and Doug Richardson, appreciating they're flogging a near-comatose horse, have introduced a nice line in self-deprecating humour to counter the feeling of déjà vu by playing up to it. The play works: it's guess the line time, and spot the returning character.

Unfortunately, this can't disguise the severe lack of tension. Harlin is no McTiernan; he can't direct action. There are no surprises. Whereas the original was an unrelenting, well-oiled action machine, this sequel progresses in fits and starts, with Harlin directing like he's trying out for the next *Aliens* film, all smoke, steam, dripping water and endless running down familiar-looking corridors. Logic plays no part whatsoever.

We could buy it first time around, but here the baddies are hopelessly inept and Willis survives the most ludicrous of situations. But somehow, despite the incongruities, despite the calculation, despite the feeling you're being taken for a ride, it's one you're willing to sign on for. This is explosive entertainment of the most extravagant kind (the budget was a reputed \$75m). As for Brucie, he's brilliant. Move aside Annie, your time's up.

Mark Salisbury



COLD LIGHT OF DAY

Starring Bob Fosse, Martin Byrne-Quinn, Geoffrey Greenhill, Andrew Edmans

Director Fiona Luise

Distributor Creative Artists Pictures

Cert 18

Despite disclaimers and name changes, this piece of celluloid excrement is clearly based on the case of Dennis Nielsen, or more precisely on the last three murders at his Cranley Gardens flat in London.

The starting point for any film of Nielsen's life would have to be Brian Masters' definitive book *Killing For Company*, a brilliant analytical study which avoids all of the exploitative pitfalls evident here. One assumes writer/director Fiona Luise had it, but she has clearly not understood it. As a result, her crudely reductive, cinematically inept and grossly distorted film is an insult to all concerned: Nielsen, the victims and the police investigators.



To cite just one example, Masters states on page 16 of his book that when arrested, [Nielsen] barely required questioning; he spoke in an almost unbroken, autobiographical monologue, as if to purge his conscience of a burden he could no longer bear alone. By stark contrast, the stereotypically aggressive police interrogator portrayed here bullies and browbeats Nielsen into revealing gruesome details about his exploits. Masters' book also reveals a number of elements of Nielsen's modus operandi



■ Bruce Willis closes in for the kill, again, in *Die Harder*

that make him a peculiarly suitable cinematic subject: while in the army he worked as a projectionist, later buying his own home movie camera and projector; he sometimes took photos of his dead victims; and he often made himself up as a corpse and lay still in front of a mirror looking at his reflection.

It is typical of the director's lack of insight that none of these elements are present in the film. Furthermore, she frames some of the badly lit, poorly recorded scenes so ineptly that one of two conversing characters is absent from the frame; perhaps in embarrassment at the atrocious dialogue.

Nigel Floyd



INFERNO IN SAFEHAVEN

Starring John Wittenbauer, Rick Gianasi,

Roy MacArthur

Directors Brian Jones, James McCalmot

Cert 18

An unspecified time in the future, the Earth has been ravaged by a holocaust from which it seems it will never recover. Life is savage and dangerous, but the Colt family — Mom, Dad, Jeff and Stephanie — have found a way out. They've got a

place in a safehaven, number 186, a vast building that's its own village, protected from the cruel world outside.

Naturally, things aren't as pleasant as they'd imagined (wouldn't be much of a movie otherwise). Safehaven 186 is a highly competitive place shakily ruled by a mayor and policed by a gang of highly unpleasant thugs led by The Preacher. Following a shocking, unexpected public hanging, Dad (Ben) is arrested for protesting and, resisting arrest, is charged with assault of a police officer — penalty: death. But Jeff isn't going to let this happen and with help from a group of rebels, headed by the heroic Pierce, attempts to rescue his father and defeat The Preacher's reign.

How many times has this general scenario been used? The super-powers have fallen out for some reason so the Earth has been devastated by nuclear attack and surviving humans live a horrific existence dominated by violence and scavenging. *Inferno In Safehaven* doesn't even do it vaguely well.

There are immediate problems in that you've given no idea what life was like before for the Colt family; they go straight to the safehaven. Considering the almost constant danger they face there it's difficult to see how the outside world could be less safe. As it is, it's difficult to see anything, period. The vast majority of the film takes place in the shadowy rooms and corridors of warehouses and derelict buildings, illuminated by solitary spotlights or narrow shafts of sunlight. Some scenes are very difficult to follow and it's easy to



mistake the leading heroes, Jeff and Pierce, for one another.

Performances of main characters are fine, particular The Preacher, played with suitable vindictiveness and slime by Roy MacArthur. Other characters are average retarded thugs, punching or shooting people as they see fit, and promiscuous 'lesbian' women, smooching up one another and going topless at the slightest provocation.

For plenty of fun with firearms and unavoidable sexual undertones, both actual and implied, *Inferno In Safehaven* is worth considering but a generally dreary, static *Mad Max* clone isn't something I'd rent.

Warren Lapworth



■ The Haven's not so safe as you thought in *Inferno In Safe Haven*

TROLL 2

*Starring Michael Stephenson, Connie McFarland, George Hardy, Margo Prey
Director Drake Floyd
Distributor Prism
Cert 18, 95 mins*

The towlette of Nilbog has gone Green with a vengeance, as hapless family Waits discover right at the start of their 'farming' vacation. The inhabitants may seem friendly, and positively heap luscious food on the visitors, but their intentions are entirely savoury: for they be Trolls and feed on humans — and being

vegetarian, meat must transform to veg before dinner! Eat their organic pies and you turn into greens ready for the Trolls' healthy diet.

Luckily, recently deceased grandpa Waits keeps up contact with his young grandson Joshua and warns him of the impending munch-mare, and against all tummy-rumbling the kid manages to keep the family off their food long enough for them to believe in Trolls and join him in his fight to rid goblin-infested Nilbog of all Greens.

What this sequel has to do with the original escapes me. And what a weed it is by comparison! The former was a jolly, well crafted Empire Pictures fairy tale gone mad, whilst this wooden effort is in dire need of Phostrogen. The acting

— with the exception of young Michael Stephenson as Joshua — is so amateur it makes you wince, and the director should be fed to the nearest Troll — no need to veg him first. All one can hope for is that the implied *Troll 3* is nipped in the bud!

Oliver Frey



FIGHTING JUSTICE

*Starring James Woods, Robert Downey Jnr, Yuji Okumoto, Kurtwood Smith, Margaret Colin
Director Joseph Ruben
Distributor 20th Century Fox
Cert 15, 104 mins*

A terse thriller in which lawyer Eddie Dodd (James Woods) is forced to take on the defence of a young Korean. His mother believes him innocent of a murder for which he was imprisoned but, while in jail, he killed a fellow inmate.

Dodd is a champion of the underdog, but is beginning to weary of such cases, though when his partner Roger Baron (Downey Jnr) shames him into accepting the case he begins to rediscover his sense of justice. Idealism takes a dive, however, when Dodd discovers that the district attorney he's up against in court is none other than the politically powerful Kurtwood Smith, a past arch enemy who has very personal reasons for making sure that Dodd's defence fails. At the last moment, Dodd discovers a witness to the original crime, but the forces of the

■ Mascara overdose in the terrible Troll 2



Tonight,
while the world is asleep...
an ancient evil
is about to awaken.

THE GUARDIAN

18

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF "THE EXORCIST"

UNIVERSAL PICTURES PRESENTS A JOE WIZAN PRODUCTION A WILLIAM FRIEDKIN FILM *THE GUARDIAN* JENNY SEAGROVE DWIER BROWN CAREY LOWELL MUSIC BY JACK HUES PRODUCED BY TODD BLACK MICKEY BOROFSKY DAN GREENBURG PRODUCTION DESIGNER GREGG FONSECA DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN A. ALONZO, A.S.C. EXECUTIVE PRODUCER DAVID SALVAN BASED ON A STORY BY DAN GREENBURG SCREENPLAY BY STEPHEN VOLK AND DAN GREENBURG DIRECTED BY WILLIAM FRIEDKIN PRODUCED BY JOE WIZAN DIRECTED BY WILLIAM FRIEDKIN UNIVERSAL RELEASE

**FROM FRIDAY AUGUST 31ST
ACROSS THE COUNTRY**



■ A baddie hits the sack in Fighting Justice

legal establishment try to grind the trial into the ground.

An emotional, political thriller, *Fighting Justice* has you rooting for Woods and Downey Jr all the way. It reminded me of the good old days, when lawyers like Perry Mason strode the courtrooms, and *L.A. Law* was just a twinkle in Hollywood's bank balance.

John Gilbert



ROCKULA

Starring Dean Cameron, Tawny Feré, Susan Tyrell, Bo Diddley, Thomas Dolby, Toni Basil
Director Luce Bercovici
Distributor Pathé Home Video
Cert PG, 87 mins

Ralph is a very unhappy vampire. A long time ago a wicked pirate killed his true love in a most awful manner and, ever since then, every 20 years she reincarnates and comes back to him. And every 20 years the same self-pitying pirate shows up to kill her off.

So Ralphie is fed up with losing his girlfriend and this year decides to stay at home. But he doesn't get out of the situation that easily. He loves music and plays gigs at a local disco. After one such night time foray, he bumps into both the pirate and the girl of his



dreams. Is his love about to be diced again?

Will Bo Diddley ever appear in a good movie? You can find out for yourself, though I wouldn't recommend it.

Even the occasional burst of music by Bo and Tom is not enough to save this picture destined for flopdom. Indeed, I became most irritated as Cameron and Feré tried to act their way out of a paper bag. A definite B list title this, though I would suggest *World Cup* reruns rather than this piece of flotsam.

John Gilbert



NOT FOR THE FAINTHEARTED

CRASH AND BURN

Starring Paul Giamatti, Megan Ward, Bill Moseley, Eva Larue
Director Charles Band
Distributor Entertainment In Video
Cert 15



One wonders what Charles Band would do with a Spielberg-sized budget. As an example of low cost filmmaking, *Crash And Burn* is a staggering achievement. No matter what you think of him as a filmmaker, the way in which Band manages to fill the screen with high tech equipment, robots and afford to go to locations such as the desert is miraculous.

In comparison, the storyline is fairly simple. We're taken into the near future where ozone is a thing of the past, the food chain has as many holes in it as a piece of cheese, and big business runs the world's government. A courier from one such corporation arrives at a lonely desert outpost; one of the few shortwave radio stations free of political control. His employers have already tried to grab control from the station boss — played by Ralph

Waite of the Waltons — but, until the unthinkable happens, he tries to ignore the politics of the situation. When the boss's daughter discovers that a crash and burn programme is being broadcast to an android within the station, everyone is put on red alert.

Crash and burn programmes nullify the moral circuits within a robot, turning it into a killer. One by one the station boss, technicians and broadcasters are brutally slaughtered; thrown over futuristic parapets, dis-armed, and treated to unusual experiences in the shower. The robot is eventually found to be one of the technicians but, as is the way in these films, it is destroyed only after being shot, burned and squashed to tin foil.

Band has, as usual, put his heart into this movie. Although it has very much the same aura as an earlier film, *Arena*, its stylish science fiction facade, which reeks of *Mad Max*, and the tense non-stop finale recommend it to all but the faint of heart.

John Gilbert



BAD DREAMS

Starring Jennifer Rubin, Bruce Abbott, Harris Yulin, Richard Lynch, Dean Cameron, E.G. Dailey
Director Andrew Fleming
Distributor CBS/Fox Video
Cert 18

Bad Dreams begins in 1976: a summer of love. Cynthia (Jennifer Rubin) joins the spiritual community Unity Fields, run by a charismatic but dangerous man, name of Harris (Richard Lynch). Pledging their eternal love for Harris and each other, the members of the community form a suicide pact. Harris 'baptises' each one in gasoline and ignites it. Cynthia escapes but, thrown by the force of the blast when the house explodes, she

■ *Bad Dreams* for Jennifer Rubin, who loses both her nail file and sanity while in a coma

collapses.

Walking after a coma lasting 13 years, Cynthia joins a therapy group, run by Dr Karmen (Bruce Abbott) at a neuropsychiatric clinic, to help her adjust to her ordeal and life 1989-style. Unable to forget the suicide pact, Cynthia has visions of Harris at the clinic, either as normal or horribly burned, urging her to commit suicide and join the other members of Unity Fields.

A bit of a slow starter, the action of *Bad Dreams* picks up when Cynthia's fellow members of the therapy group mysteriously kill themselves one by one. It looks like suicide but why, wonder the police having recently reopened the Unity Fields investigation, is Cynthia always in the vicinity? Convinced that Harris is taking their lives in her place, Cynthia has premonitions or bad dreams — hence the title! — before each suicide. The seedy surroundings of the clinic suddenly become a living nightmare for all involved.

Bad Dreams is not such a shocking movie, even though there are a few gory death scenes, but it is an intense thriller with a good bit of mystery thrown in. Plenty of characters to get involved with, each with their own disorder, and each meeting with a suitable fate. The end, if slightly unclear, is certainly action-packed, with a combination of chaos and suspense. For anyone who wants a decent film to watch side order of horror, *Bad Dreams* is well worth renting.

Richard Eddy



SECOND SIGHT

Starring Bronson Pinchot, John Larroquette, Stuart Pankin, Bess Armstrong

Director Joel Zwick

Distributor Warner Home Video
Cert 15

 A psychic detective agency is probably the best setting for a screwball comedy. *Second Sight* is its name and it is headed by Wills, who would like to make some profit out of his partner Preston Pickett's protege, the psychic Bobby. Bobby is definitely a phenomenon, who goes into



■ A medium gets well done in *Second Sight*

the weirdest trances to uncover any criminal activity in the past, present and future. The tracing of a hit-and-run car accident develops into a full-blown kidnapping of a cardinal. The case isn't being helped by Bobby assuming the spirit of Murray, the late boyfriend of sister Elisabeth, who indirectly was responsible for his death by asking him for some ice-cream.

In the meantime Bobby is on the trail



■ The freaks make headlines in *Basket Case 2*

TOGETHER AGAIN...

BASKETCASE 2

Starring Kevin Van Hentenryck, Annie Ross, Kathryn Meisle, Heather Rattray, Jason Evers, Ted Sorel

Director Frank Henenlotter
Distributor Medusa Pictures
Cert 18, 84 mins

 Medusa's run of choice horror product continues unabated with a sequel to a cult classic that could very well cap the success of the first film.

The original, of course, concerned Duane and his brother Bellal, the latter a lumpy freak who at birth was joined to his normal brother's hip. Attitude problems started when his guardians decide to have the freak removed from Duane so that he could lead a normal life. Both go on the run, with Bellal in a basket to hide his hideous deformity. At the end of the original, both brothers fall out of a Times Square window. End of story,

of the kidnappers, who are also responsible for the car accident, but in his efforts he destroys an entire office block with his psychic sonar, and takes over the control of a passenger jet on the runway bound for Pittsburgh, and taxis it downtown with his power psyche to where the cardinal is being held.

Confused? Don't be, after all, it's only a screwball comedy. You'll either totally love it or totally hate it. Bronson Pinchot as psychic Bobby, John Larroquette as Bess Armstrong as down-to-earth sister Elisabeth provide the perfect cast in this wacky comedy with a witty script. Give it a try.

Franco Frey



HOWLING 5: THE REBIRTH

Starring Philip Davis, Victoria Catlin, Elizabeth Shé, Ben Cole, William Shockley
Distributor Vestron
Cert 18

 They should have titled this movie *The Afterbirth* for all the originality of theme it displays. Budapest, and a year at the end of the nineteenth century. The wind is blasting snow against the walls of the castle, and inside all but two are dead. The survivors, a man and a woman, soon take their lives, though not before discussing and confirming the killing of a baby within the castle. But as the man's consciousness fades away he hears the child cry and knows that further

generations of his family are doomed through the curse of the werewolf.

Forward to present day Budapest, and a bus load of celebrity passengers travel towards the selfsame castle. During the night they are killed by a ravenous beast and soon come to realise that one of their number is a werewolf. The head of their party, the Count, is desperate to wipe out the scourge, even if it means killing every single person on the castle tour. The few survivors, of course, do not want to partake of his crazy scheme and a battle of wits, and blood, ensues.

Better than episodes two to four, though not by much, *The Rebirth* exudes a gothic feel, the few sets draped in menacing shadows and glaring freight. The storyline is



■ A rare wolly moment from Howling V: The Rebirth

mundane, the actors appear to be involved in a desperate fight against stereotype, and the monster is almost non-existent. All we see is a flash of claws and muzzle, one shot of its backside, and not much else. An easy film for the make-up crew, though not for any audience.

John Gilbert

die-hard medieval fantasy fanatics, and they may in turn may find proceedings a little too harmful.

Franco Frey



JOE 90 VOL 6 THUNDERBIRDS VOL 13

Distributor Channel 5
Cert U, 100 mins approx

 Joe 90 weighs in with the sixth volume of his puppet adventures, though the episodes on this tape are by no means the best of the series.

The first two segments, which both waste tape with pre and post credits, concern dream scenarios. In 'Line Handled' Joe falls asleep in front of the television set while watching a western. His father and the men from



■ Hands-on rescue experiences from Thunderbirds Vol. 13

WIN, for whom he is a special agent, able to take on the brain patterns of experts in various fields, appear as black garbed baddies, robbing banks and generally causing disorder. Sheriff Joe, of course, wins every day. The race takes Joe into dreamland once again, this time in a race to Monte Carlo against the army and for the honour of WIN. In a very predictable twist, he is woken up by his father who tells him that he had given him his brain patterns the night before and so they've had the same dream.

In 'The Professional', Joe is given the brain pattern of a safe cracker and ordered to retrieve US funds from a Third World dictator who has been using

it for his own nefarious purposes and not for hospitals and food. This is by far the best episode on the tape and followed by an anticlimax, 'Talkdown'. An experimental plane has crashed almost killing the pilot. Joe's father records the pilot's brain pattern so that, once a second prototype is built, Joe can do the flight and save the project from financial cutbacks. While he's in the air, he discovers that the original pilot had a mental breakdown and Joe has to land the plane. Guess who's in trouble?

The Thunderbirds volume is by far the best buy of the two, although it only contains two episodes, but what classic crackers they are. During 'The Duchess Assignment', Lady Penelope's old friend, the gambling-mad Duchess of Royston, is robbed of all but an

BUY VIDEO

HAWK THE SLAYER

Starring Jack Palance, John Terry, Bernard Bresslaw, Roy Kinnear, Patrick Megee
Director Terry Marcel
Distributor Channel 5
Cert PG, 90 mins, £9.99

 Sword with a bit of sorcery in this rather tame tale of good versus bad brother. John Terry looks the part of the saintly brother who, thanks to the last minute inheritance from his father, is left with a rather nifty remote control sword with built-in Duracell light. Jack Palance as the evil Voltan only gets half the chance to look grim thanks to a nasty wound inflicted by Hawk's spouse Elaine before her untimely death, causing him constantly to wear a lop-sided Darth Vader helmet to protect chokers from fainting. Hawk is enlisted by Ranulf to rescue an abbees abducted by Voltan for ransom.

With the help of the local friendly witch Hawk gathers three further fellow fighters, giant Gort, Crow the Elf and Baldwin the Dwarf, and together they ride off to the rescue. The magnificent five are supported by music which would befit a Spaghetti western and belies the ancient period of this piece. The final showdown takes place in the church of an abbey where Voltan and his not so merry men finally meet their deserved death. For a place of refuge and peace, this church certainly takes a beating. The corpse count is literally in the hundreds and makes you think twice about going to church on Sunday. Not heavy enough for adult viewing, and yet ultimately too brutal for younger viewers, Hawk The Slayer will only attract the

PSYCHIC

VIBES

Starring Jeff Goldblum, Cyndi Lauper, Peter Falk, Julian Sands
Director Ken Kwapis
Distributor RCA/Columbia
Cert PG

 Jeff Goldblum and Cyndi Lauper make a perfect comedy team as two psychics succumbed to South America by suspicious character Peter Falk. Ostensibly, Falk is looking for his son, who has disappeared in the jungle, but when the psychics get to their destination, Goldblum realises that Falk is after something else: The Gold Room of the Incas.

Unfortunately, at the beginning of the film we discover that the temple in which the treasure is supposed to be stored instead holds a magical glowing pyramid, the spirit of which possesses anyone who touches it. The psychics are in for a grand time, especially when another less scrupulous member of their profession turns up searching not for gold but for the real secret power of the Inca temple. Things are then set to get hot in the rainforest.

Falk, Goldblum and Lauper — who I'd never

viewed as a particularly good comedy actress until Vibes — make the most of a witty script. Director Ken Kwapis has done a great job, giving what I suspect to be a cheapie that widescreen feel. Excellent entertainment with some of the best one-liners I've heard since *A Fish Called Wanda*.

John Gilbert





MAGIC MUSCLE

FIRE AND ICE

Animation

Director Ralph Bakshi

Distributor Warner Home Video

Cert PG, 78 mins, £9.99

 Ralph Bakshi made a name for himself with a salaciously naughty animated *Fritz The Cat*, followed by a flawed but imaginative *Lord Of The Rings*. Perhaps wanting to avoid the strictures of adapting a well-known book, while making full use of animation's capabilities to create a fantasy world, his next project was an original script, *Fire And Ice*, made in 1983.

This is classic sword and sorcery, some reviewers thought clichéd, with a hunky young hero, a sexy and plucky princess, evil magicians and colossal forces unleashed: the existence of Fire Keep is threatened by the merciless Ice Lord Nekron. Thousand-foot glaciers are set grinding their way towards this last stronghold of fire — will the planet be engulfed by a new ice age? Thrill to the dramatic Marvel at the special effects! Drool over the princess (or the youthful hero) Boo the villain!

And indeed you do! True enough, the story is not highly original and smacks of *Star Wars*, but its presentation never flags. Bakshi teamed up with cult fantasy artist Frank Frazetta (where is he now?), who created the backdrops, the look and

feel of this imaginary world and strongly influenced the physical attributes of the cast: the princess is all hips, the boy cute and well muscled.

The movie utilises Rotoscope to great effect, shooting live actors and using them as blueprints for the then exaggerated animated versions, resulting in quite stunning life-like movements. This adds to the suspension of disbelief required in animated films with human protagonists and accentuates the inherent eroticism of this type of fable, while also benefitting the realism of the violence in the tale.

Sword and sorcery movies are a scarce breed, and good ones are rarer still. That an animated one should strike such a chord may seem surprising, but then, because it is drawn it is not dependent on the quality or expense of sets and special effects: all can be achieved according to the creator's wishes with equal care lavished throughout. The result is a coherent whole that not even *Conan the Barbarian* managed, and while not truly innovative, the movie combines in a classic nutshell all that is sword and sorcery. It's a pity it didn't succeed enough financially to encourage further outings. Things could only have become even better, and more original. Still, fans of the genre should count themselves lucky this one made it: it's a collectable gem!

Oliver Frey



expensive painting by a gang of casino crooks. They want to steal the oil painting and Penelope must stop them, even at the risk of her own life.

'Attack of the Alligators' also features her Ladyship, this time helping out when scientists at a remote jungle research station inadvertently create monster alligators. The episode is possibly the most famous ever made and is worth having on tape for the Anderson fan who is a child at heart.

John Gilbert



MONSTER HIGH

Starring Linda, Diane Franklin, David Merritt, Robert M. Lind, Sean Haines, D.J. Kersner
Director Rüdiger Poell
Cert 15, 91 mins

 Mr Armageddon is about to have the worst 24 hours of his eternal life. It is time to have a bit of fun and tie up life on Earth, but he did not reckon on the bungling stupidity of two Alien Nation rejects (who steal his doomsday weapon that looks suspiciously like a basketball) and the equally retarded students at an American high school.



He starts off well, by going through the school year book and picking a few choice girls for his attentions while also bringing a demonic statue to life and turning another student into a zombie by using the huge-condom-over-the-head trick. He also turns a teacher into a computer head, and unleashes a giant pot plant from a boy's unofficial chemistry experiment. Anyone who comes into contact with it gets stoned.

A group of students decide to fight Armageddon, but the only way appears to be with a type of *Star Trek* logic. They organise a basketball game with the Earth as the prize. Armageddon agrees and his team of zombies and chipheads put up a brave performance against the ed kids. But, of course, they lose and the man with the D-Day switch leaves for a 1,000-year sabbatical, promising to be back for a rematch.

Sounds jolly doesn't it? But *Monster High*'s plot is a free-form riff of garbled garbage, interspersed with several shots of tit, and penile humour. A dog on a tricycle eating chipssticks could have put on a more interesting show. I advise you not to allow this invidious piece of trash into your home.

John Gilbert



GOHOST SHIP

Starring Hazel Court, Dermot Walsh, Hugh Burden, John Robison
Director Vernon Sewell
Distributor Warner Home Video
90 mins, £9.99

 When nearly newly-weds (Court and Walsh) set their hearts on a beaten-up old pleasure craft as their first home together, they are surprised to meet with doorm-laden warnings from the shipyard owner. The 'Cyclops' is haunted, says he. 'Haven't you read the papers?'.



GHOST SHIP

However, sensible and distinctly non-paranormal hubby pooh-poohs these rumours, and buys the boat for a knock down price. His investment soon accrues interest in the shape of a cigar-smoking apparition in a boiler suit who seems to have taken up residence in the engine room. Enter a parapsychologist (Hugh Burden) with a mean set of tuning forks and a neat line in mystery solving, who proves that there are more things in heaven and earth than the odd corpse or two stashed away in the hold.

A period piece perhaps, and certainly one for the collectors of obscure British thrillers, although this quaint 1952 black and white movie cannot be classed among our nation's finest. Tame, forced and not remotely scary, it accentuates the fact that Hollywood has always been superior to us when it comes to portraying tension and terror on celluloid. Still, there is something strangely endearing and sociologically intriguing about *Ghost Ship* (were people really that polite to one another in the Fifties?) which must have led the distributors to suppose that they were rereleasing a minor classic of this stiff upper-lipped sub-genre.

Patience Coster



STAR TREK

The Original TV Series, Episodes 53 and 54: 'The Ultimate Computer', 'The Omega Glory'

Starring William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelly

Directors John M Lucas, Vincent McEvety

Distributor CIC Video

Cert U, £9.99

The old crusties yet again go where no man has gone before. As I have stated before, I personally prefer the Next Generation series but this is a piece of TV history, eclipsed in my mind only by *Doctor Who*.

Of the two stories, *The Ultimate Computer* is the better, *The Omega Glory* is too full of American patriotism for my liking. *The Ultimate Computer* is the M5, supposedly able to run a ship unaided; the Enterprise is chosen to carry the computer into mock battle, but things soon go terribly wrong. The M5 takes over the ship but threatens to destroy several Federation ships in a training exercise.

The second episode sees Kirk, McCoy and Spock beaming down to a planet where due to a biological war

centuries ago the two groups of inhabitants are constantly at one another's throats. The Coms and the Yangs are the combatants, but it takes Kirk (as usual) to realise that the Yangs are Yanks, and Coms could be Communists when he spots a tattered American flag in the Yangs camp.

At £9.99, this is well worth looking out for if you are a Trekkie. But those of you who, like me, enjoy Kirk's battles with the Klingons may be slightly disappointed.

Mark Caswell



ZOLTAN... HOUND OF DRACULA

Starring Michael Pataki, Reggie Nalder, Jose Ferrer

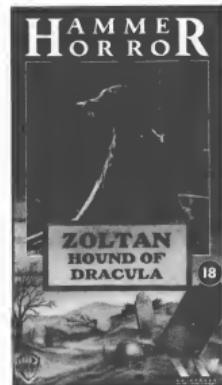
Director Albert Band

Distributor Warner Home Video

Cert 12, 83 mins, £3.99

It is difficult to imagine that the rerelease of this 1977 stalk-and-gnash movie will have packs of fans clawing their way to the checkout counter, for as anybody who reads their *FEAR* will know, the seventies were not kind to the venerable House Of Hammer, and Zoltan certainly proves that point well enough.

When Russian soldiers unearth a Dracula family vault in deepest Communist Transylvania, they unleash evil forces that have lain dormant for a hundred years in the shape of Count Drac's faithful servant, Veli Smit (Nalder), and Zoltan, his vampiric dog.



BOOKS

FACES OF FEAR

Edited by Douglas E Winter

Publisher Pan

Format PB £3.99

Ever wondered why and how the masters of terror came to their craft, or what they are like outside their seemingly all-enveloping office hours? Wait no longer. At last, Douglas E Winter's classic interview format book has been published in Britain.

Behind the threatening Dave McKean cover, Winter parades the more obvious horror hosts including V C Andrews, Clive Barker, Robert Bloch, James Herbert, Michael McDowell and, of course, that veritable hermit Stephen King. Many of the interviews were written several years ago, and it shows. Andrews is, of course, dead and the King interview takes life up to *The Tommyknockers*; Clive Barker is treated a little more than a short story writer and Herbert is still suffering from *The Rats*.

Nevertheless, one can't be too harsh on the book. It provides a valuable report on the lives and loves of horror

NOT TO BE MISSED

Recommended

Fair

Poor

Diabolical

HORROR

Creed

Encyclopedia Of Forbidden Knowledge

Faces Of Fear

Hallowe'en Hell

Kiss Of Death

Necroscope 4: Deadspeaks

The Room



SCIENCE FICTION

Bury My Heart At W H Smiths

The City, Not Long After

Stand On Zanzibar

Total Recall



FANTASY

Black Cocktail

Hidden Turnings

The History Of The Lord Of The Rings, Part One: The

Return Of The Shadow

The Magefire: The Dark Amulet Cycle Book One



ART

The Dick Tracy Casebook

writers which can be compared with their present day existences. It is, for example, interesting to compare the early literary portraits of writers such as Ramsey Campbell and Ted Klein — their aspirations — with their contemporary feelings and desires.

The appendices have, fortunately, been updated, displaying publications and organisations which horror fans might want to investigate or contact. Winter also shows a considerable knowledge of the genre, in most cases asking just the right questions and leaving his opinions to its introduction.

Whilst no other books of its ilk are on the shelves, I somewhat hesitantly recommend *Faces Of Fear*, but in a few months several other such works will be available so, if you don't have the money to spare, wait until they arrive for comparison.

John Gilbert



THE HISTORY OF THE LORD OF THE RINGS PART ONE: THE RETURN OF THE SHADOW

J R R Tolkien

Publisher Unwin

Format PB £5.50

Another weighty text purporting to come from the pen of the long deceased J R R Tolkien. Admittedly he started the contemporary

SOUND TRAP

Warfare: In A Rock Tribute To Hammer Horror

Distributor Revolver

The calm, oppressive atmosphere of Hammer's gothic countryside disturbed by the raging torments of rock guitar and the pendulum beat of drums. I couldn't imagine it at first, but once I'd heard Warfare's heartfelt tribute to Hammer's horror tradition, I had to admit a certain liking for it.

The enthusiasm the lads show on their album is infectious, and equivalent to that displayed by Cushing and Lee on the set of a *Dracula* or *Frankenstein* movie. Evo, the group's energetic lead singer and writer, storms out the words to such tracks as 'Hammer Horror', 'Plague Of The Zombies', 'A Velvet Rhapsody' and 'Solo Of Shadows'. My favourite anthems, however, have to be 'Phantom Of The Opera', which does not mention the central character once but keeps reminding you that he is there in the shadows, and 'Scream Of The Vampire', which is indeed an accolade to Hammer at his hammiest.

Pure-blooded rock aficionados may not appreciate the somewhat restrained and muted music and lyrics, but . . .

Hammer fans will be pleased to know that the words are decipherable, and surprisingly relevant to the subject matter. Evo is obviously a Hammer fan (see *FEAR* issue 20), and within the context of rock music, has obviously done some justice to the filmic material. Buy it and experience yet another aspect of the Hammer horror phenomenon.

John Gilbert



fantasy scene — along with peer C S Lewis — but each new book in these various series, edited by Christopher Tolkien, becomes more self-indulgent and scholarly.

The current volume does have some merit when compared with the process of writing *Lord Of The Rings*, as set down in *The Letters Of J R R Tolkien* (also published by Unwin). It charts the course of the tale from its original incarnation when Aragon was but a hobbit, Treebeard was one of the dark lord's minions and Frodo did not exist.



Tolkien's original maps are contained within the book, together with facsimiles of the first manuscript pages. It is a fascinating study, showing how the author's mind worked and proves that the *Lord Of The Rings* story could have been very different from that of the ring war with which we are so familiar.

Despite such praise, I should point out that whereas the Ring trilogy is a simple read meant, like Shakespeare's plays, for the common people, this

PHOTO RECALL

CREED

James Herbert

Publisher Hodder and Stoughton

Format HB £12.95

Yet another change of tack by an author who knows how to play the writing game with the nerve of an unerringly successful gambler. His latest book is a humorous retort in which the demons of yesteryear rage against the slick movie monsters of today's cinema.

Centre stage, Joe Creed. A pernicious paparazzi coward, he stumbles onto the plot of the century after the funeral of a former movie queen. Standing in the shade of a mausoleum, he watches and takes photos as a skinny figure of a man creeps up to the new grave and begins to urinate... no... masturbate, on it.

Very soon, he wishes that he had not taken photographs of the shabby figure. Someone wants the snaps back. Creed's flat is raided and a creature who looks very much like Nosferatu attacks him. Creed decides to fight back, but when the son of his failed marriage is kidnapped he realises that there is more to life than the scoop of the year. If he wants his son back, he will have to join a weird conspiracy, backed by the real demons of this world, but even he cannot guess at what these creatures really want from him, and at the important part he must play in their game.

It is difficult to describe *Creed* in comparison with James Herbert's other work. It is the most

JAMES HERBERT



overtly humorous of all his books, and probably the least subtle. Herbert also appears to have enjoyed writing the novel and, if he experienced at first hand half the hilarious paparazzi capers that are packed into it, I'm not surprised that this project had such an appeal. The man is obviously on top form, has developed a wry sense of black humour, but has not lost his ability to tap on graves.

A streamlined racehorse of a book, pulsing with energy, *Creed* will delight Herbert fans, and surely astonish them.

John Gilbert



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 HEADLINE



AND FOR SUPERB HORROR FICTION FROM
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ADVENTURELAND

Steve Harris

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treasure is smothered with insertions, references and asides which are no doubt a boon for researchers but a curse for the casual hobby lover. There is little doubt that this history could be a big seller, but the crusty way in which it is structured is liable to turn people off when they have not even reached the third-way stage. A pity, as many fans with a love of Tolkien's deceptively simple storytelling style are interested to learn how such myths are born.

John Gilbert



TOTAL RECALL

Piers Anthony

Publisher Legend

Format HB £12.99

Almost blow for blow like the film, Piers Anthony's novelisation of *Total Recall* may prove of service to those who want to relive Arnold Schwarzenegger's Martian exploits in their mind's eye, but will do little to satisfy those fans of Philip K Dick who were expecting more.

Doug Quaid is an Earthbound construction worker with a sexy wife and violent nightmares about a seemingly fictitious after-life, a spy on the planet Mars. Quaid decides to go to Rekall Incorporated, manufacturers of synthetic memories, whose motto is 'We can remember it for you wholesale'. He wants to experience the computer fabricated memories of a spy on Mars but the process rekindles memories of his real self, working for a corrupt mining organisation on the red planet.

Discovering that he cannot trust anyone, least of all his workmates and

his wife, he travels to Mars and tries to contact the leader of a group of mutant freedom fighters but, little realising that his memory loss is a carefully calculated ruse on the part of the Mars mining outfit, he leads its cruel boss straight to the mutants' hideout.

PIERS ANTHONY



While Piers Anthony is an accomplished fantasy writer, his attempt at novelisation is not as outstanding as some of the work by Alan Dean Foster, Orson Scott Card or Craig Shaw Gardner. The book lacks the character depth of novelisations such as *The Abyss* or *The Lost Boys*, although it ingeniously homes in on the excitement generated by the film. No doubt Anthony will develop a taste for these things, but it seems a pity that he's had to practice with a cinema blockbuster like *Total Recall*.

John Gilbert



THE WEREWOLVES OF LONDON

Brian Stableford

Publisher Simon and Schuster

Format HB £14.95

An apocryphal tale set in the nineteenth century where weird creatures, Victorian magicians and a grim twisting of established catholic doctrine abound.

David Lydyard is mysteriously bitten by a snake whilst on archaeological safari in Egypt and begins to have visions of beings behind the creation myth. Satan and God, however, are not what we might believe. The former is chained across the firmament, eternally damned to watch the Earth glow in the sky, able indirectly to influence the creatures upon it, but unable to reach out his hand and touch its soil. God, is also bound, but this time by his own laws which decree that he must not interfere in the affairs of mortals, or other creatures upon his creation.

Below all this godly tangle, three groups of occultists do battle for possession of Gabriel Gill, a young man of mysterious parentage who has the power of second sight and believes that he is in some way possessed by a demon. First, there is the self-acclaimed magician Jacob Harkender, who has the boy brought up at a convent but plans to take him away and use him for some nefarious purpose. Harkender is a masochist who has turned his hobby to good effect, using whips and buggerage to invoke the dark powers of his mind.

However, before Harkender can take the boy, Gabriel is spirited away by another group, calling themselves the Werewolves of London. These

Shapeshifters plan to protect the boy and help him develop his powers so that one day he might be of some use to them.

Yet another group, an ostensibly religious sect called the Order of St Amrys, is also interested in Gabriel and what he represents. Such interests might, however, become inconsequential as those creatures called Fallen Angels have again begun to stride the Earth, reflecting their battles in Hell onto the mortal, and lesser fantastical, beings on the planet.

Part one of what should prove to be an inventive parallel time scenario, *Werewolves of London* is, like Stableford's previous novel, *Empire of Fear*, a historical adventure, in which reality is fused with metaphysical



discourses regarding the nature of creation. Far from being boring, these short explanations of universal motivation add depth to the novel and aid understanding of Stableford's magical universe.

Stableford treats magic as a kind of fabulous physics with its own laws and deceits, but he also draws the line between it and contemporary science in interesting ways. The magic we see here is that written about by the likes of Aleister Crowley and Dion Fortune in fictional novels that also explained their art, and also by Dennis Wheatley — though his understanding of magic was tainted by religious dogma and racism.

For those who thought that *Empire of Fear* was just a one-off, Brian Stableford has again shown that he, like Hyperion author Dan Simmons, can cross genres, weaving fantasy and horror with elements of science. Heavy on atmosphere, fevered by intimations of things to come, the first part of this trilogy is truly magical.

John Gilbert



HALLOWEES' HELL

Neville Steed

Publisher Headline

Format HB £12.95

A first horror novel, and a valiant attempt at that, although Neville Steed has served his literary apprenticeship with several mystery novels. Taking two ancient horror clichés he ingeniously weaves a story that shouldn't give any horror fan indigestion.

As American evangelist Bobby Quick enters Hallowees, the small town's telephone system is disrupted by a mysterious presence. Phones ring unbidden, bringing messages of death, and telling tales of the more lurid deeds done within its perimeter.

Just one woman, Doty Enid,

VIRGIN BIRTH?

KISS OF DEATH

Daniel Rhodes

Publisher New English Library

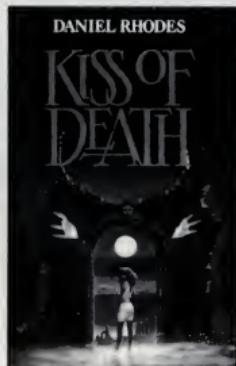
Format HB £13.95

Following on from his innovative black magic stories, *Next After Lucifer* and *Adversary*, Daniel Rhodes this time treats the path of witchcraft with the story of a successful vineyard owner who becomes inveigled by a demon lover.

His protagonist is ripe for collection by the forces of Hell. Divorced after a bloodspattered marriage, and trying to relax while on a holiday with his daughter in the south of France, he stops to look around a ruined abbey. Semi-seriously making a blood-pact with the forces at the abbey he returns to the hotel, only to encounter a mysterious woman with whom he goes to bed. This mysterious succubus is gone in the morning, but his daughter, Lisa, has seemingly had a nightmare in which she was violated by a strange man-creature.

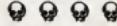
Upon his return to California, his daughter discovers that she is pregnant, despite her protestations that she is still a virgin. Lisa dies giving birth to the baby, called Selein. It is a witch name and she is cursed, for everything she comes to love will be claimed by the demons who have attended her since conception.

The black magic/witchcraft genre is obviously not dead while Rhodes continues to write his



superlative novels. Here we have the glowing horrors of classic Sixties' Hammer and Corman movies, but brilliantly updated by a writer whom others have yet to emulate. The occult fiction genre can still fascinate, and Rhodes is without doubt its prime mover.

John Gilbert



LIFE STORY

BURY MY HEART AT W H SMITHS

Brian Aldiss

Publisher Hodder and Stoughton

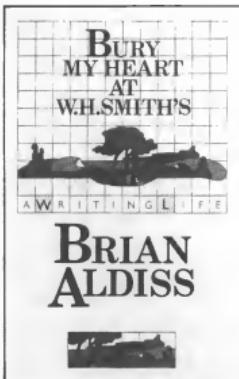
Format HB £13.95

 Probably the most hyped science fiction title of the year, Brian Aldiss's slim, though entertaining, autobiography more than lives up to its publisher's promises.

The author starts an appraisal of his life during his years as a bookseller at a shop in Oxford which was frequented by literary personages such as John Betjeman, whom he liked, and Evelyn Waugh, whom he didn't like. Aldiss used the shop as the background for his first novel *The Brightfoot Diaries*.

From there to the finale in which his critically acclaimed contemporary novel, *Forgotten Life*, nears publication, Aldiss, with characteristic skill portrays his life in a series of broadly sketched anecdotes, mixing hard fact with wry characterisation and not a little comment on the years and books that he has seen.

The publishers no doubt see *Bury My Heart...* as a great literary event, but ordinary science fiction fans, as well as the literati, are likely to lap up everything Aldiss says. He is, without question, an acknowledged expert on the genre — as reader and read — and a connoisseur of good literature, but this book throws away all the facades that readers may have built up around him. Yes, he may have written the weighty non-fiction tome



Trillion Year Spree, and novels such as the *Hellenica cycle* and *Life In The West*, but he also has a gently beating, often generous, heart and I, for one, hope that it's still some time before it truly is buried.

John Gilbert



philosopher Chad Mulligan. An intellectual discourse on the problems of overpopulation finds space to mention the Code of Hammurabi — 'the first truly elaborate legal code we have any record of' — and is genuinely thought provoking, as is the book as a whole.

Unfortunately Chad is inclined to cruder provocation, such as: 'I don't approve of people who encourage psychoses in their fellow human beings. You people do. Cure yourself of this habit.' This comes predictably irritating, and is echoed in narrative

motto have reduced it to what is no more than a prolonged contents page, with too many occasions where this ... is beyond the scope of this book' crops up. To further discomfort, an avid editor has taken the cross-referencing of items to ludicrous lengths in a book this short: to be referred back to page 13 when you've barely progressed 200 words further on page 15 is facetious; but then this is supposedly an encyclopedic.

Despite this, the book is a well-produced newcomer's introduction to man's search for the unknowable with plenty of tantalising iceberg tips to encourage further reading elsewhere on its many topics — even though the author ends with the obligatory admonition to steer clear of magic practices...

Oliver Frey



THE ROOM

Michael Grey

Publisher Corgi

Format PB £2.99

 This man has obviously not read *The Amityville Horror* or realised that haunted house stories are rather passé these days. Grey has made an attempt to be contemporary with his story line, introducing a complex dual family set-up, but even that is not enough to offset the dire nature of this story.

Bob Briar is a single parent who, with his two beautiful young daughters Harvest and Bounty, decides to take advantage of a house that they have just inherited. The house has also been

left to Rebecca Halifax, coincidentally a single-parent with two teenage boys called Ron and Jamie. There could be problems here, but the two parties' immediate concerns are the strange undomesticated events about which they have been amply warned. Dead flies, strange cryptograms — presumably from beyond the grave — and sudden family problems that could be put down to divorce blues, but are more likely to be the results of possession, like the novel like rats on a burning ship.

Grey keeps a firm hold on the narrative but never manages to take the book beyond the graves of mediocrity. That fact, coupled with the uninspired cover artwork, would fail to capture my attention as I walked down the halls of the local W H Smith.

John Gilbert



STAND ON ZANZIBAR

John Brunner

Publisher Legend

Format PB £4.99

 An undoubtedly classic of the Sixties, Brunner's massive 576-page dystopian novel draws its title from his textbook-type prediction: if during World War I the entire population of the world could be stood face-to-face on the 147 square mile Isle of Wight, in 2010 you'd need the 640 square mile Zanzibar. Indeed, the book as a whole reads like it's swallowed a dozen or so scholarly tomes on our ominous future. These are mostly regurgitated in the form of 'excerpts' from books by hip



incidents such as when a Catholic priest accidentally ingests a hallogenogenic and drops his prepared sermon for what he really believes — ie: that Catholic opposition to birth control is stupid and cruel. That is as may be, but illustrated in cheap shot fashion. Brunner also suffers from a desire to invent his own slang, so 'pm' becomes poppa-

mommies', unattached women are 'shiggies' and whites are 'pale-asses' (instead of pale-faces, presumably). There are also plenty of made up brandnames — Nydofoam sneakers, SeKure Stunners — which simply heighten the sense of unreality. Why not use real brands for peripheral products, as Gibson did in *Neuromancer*?

Brunner's 2010 is a familiar dystopia, ruled by massive corporations and 'megabrain computers', plagued by casual thuggery and muckers (people turned into insane killers by rat race conditions). The plot is less than compulsive; subtle, and complicated by numerous sub-plots its back is broken

by endless interruptions by Chad, and 'contexts', apparently random background pieces. It recalls *Moby Dick* in both size and the self-evident struggle of the author with a massive subject via various perspectives. But Zanzibar's subject is too diffuse and the action too pulpy towards the end. It's by no means an easy read, but plenty of thought has gone into it so that just when you'd almost given up, Brunner surprises you with a new insight. A genuinely provocative challenge.

Stuart Wynne



CONCERNS OF COSMOS

BLACK COCKTAIL

Jonathan Carroll

Publisher Legend

Format HB £8.99 PB £4.50

 It's a commonly held belief that we're each of us the sum of several parts, integral yet separate characteristic pieces of a collective whole, like the component ingredients of the most exotic drink. From that, in turn, comes the biorhythmic calendar, our 'good' days for some things, 'bad' days for others... and so on.

In his new novella, Jonathan Carroll embraces the entire subject but, as usual, he does it with one hand firmly hidden behind his back. Instead of merely postulating that inherited or affected mannerisms, physical likenesses, attitudinal behaviour and so on are all elements which combine *within* us to make us what we are, Carroll has gone — the now obligatory, for him — one step further. He would have it that each of us is one part of a greater and far headier brew, though not of the ethereal, sentient one-ness suggested by the Eastern philosophies. Rather, we are all part of a much more manageable core... fifths, to maintain the drink analogy. Five fingers, five toes... why not five parts?

As far as Ingram York is concerned he is a complete entity, a corporeal whole, despite the recent tragic death of his lover in a Los Angeles earthquake. But all loss creates gain and, ultimately, out of the chaos must come order. For Ingram, world-weary master of ceremonies on the bizarre radio talk show 'Off The Wall', his personal slice of normality seems to have been returned when, on recommendation from his sister, Maris, and her husband, he meets Michael Billa. Death, Billa tells Ingram, is like a bartender: he can whip up any number of exotic drinks.

Lif for Ingram starts to get a little complicated. He has the tyres slashed on his bike, shit smeared all over his apartment walls and a haphazard collection of still-bloody lumps of meat left on his bed. In addition, he learns of the fate of Anthony Fanelli and encounters the eternally-fifteen years old Clinton Deir and the beautiful Eddie Devon — all from Billa's school days — and, from his own past, Blair Dowling, the only woman Ingram has ever loved. He is told by Deir that one day soon he will find a small seashell in his pocket, and then carry it there forever. 'That's when it begins,' Deir tells him. 'The day you find it, you're there.'



But where is there?

Like the hapless insecticidised Gregor Samsa in Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, the eternally puzzled Yosarian from Heller's *Catch 22*, the ill-at-ease alien mailard star of Steve Gerber's *Howard The Duck*, both of the Smiths — King's Johnny and Heinlein's Valentine Michael — and even the protagonist in Jules Feiffer's story of an adult who decides one day to be a child again, Ingram York struggles through increasingly disturbed and disturbing physical and mental landscapes until a final revelation is encountered. But, unsurprisingly, the eventual answer makes the question which spawned it seem infinitely preferable by comparison, and Carroll's final paragraph plumbs cold new depths of alienation and despondency as hope is so effortlessly thwarted in Grand Guignol style.

As always with Carroll's books, it's almost what he doesn't say that makes the most powerful and lasting impression. In only 62 text pages — complemented by six stark one-page illustrations from Dave McKean — he manages to build a complex metaphysical enigma centring not only on one man's forced reassessment of his place in the cosmos but also on the inbuilt human need to be some part of an albeit undefined greater design.

Pete Crowther



THE DICK TRACY CASEBOOK FAVOURITE ADVENTURES, 1931-1990

Selected by Max Allan Collins and Dick Locher

Publisher Penguin Books

Large format limpback £6.99

 To remind everyone of where this summer's blockbuster movie was born, here's a selection of the comic strip original by the strip's current author and artist.



Tracy is an acquired taste, the drawing is highly stylised and the plots are over the top — the feel wholly American. Look at these tales and wonder how anyone could conceive of bringing them to celluloid, with real people, and still be true to the original! While no doubt cashing in on the movie phenomenon, this book is a valuable addition to any serious comic enthusiast. And the yarns ain't half bad either!

Oliver Frey



THE MAGEFIRE THE DARK AMULET CYCLE BOOK ONE

Alexander Balol

Publisher Headline

Format HB £14.95

 Another first time author in hardback, this time with the first book of an 'epic' fantasy quest. Leighor likes to be seen as a healer, though his laying on of hands has more to do with crime than any soothing aspirations. By moving to the Sieliers he hopes to find riches and streets of gold, but when he arrives discovers a rural backwater with not much help or sustenance or entertainment.

His only hope of a reasonable living appears to be a summons from the district's Archbaron who wants him to perform a little favour. Not too difficult, you might think, but the Archbaron's commission leads him into dour company and the prospect of harsh justice for a murder he did not commit. While trying to save his own bones, he must also defeat a conspiracy to bring about the domination by evil of realms of



the East. His fraught task is further complicated as his enemies learn the use of the harpoon, also called the Magetor which could give its user control over all creation.

The Headline publicity on Alexander Balol rates him as a first time novelist but his editor must have seen something in the man to warrant this epic series and, indeed, he is a rare find. His style

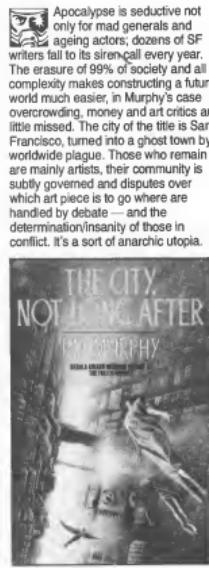
has a maturity which the others — Harris and Jones — do not yet possess, he is able to sustain and retain tight control of a lengthy narrative, and his imagery, though not wholly without Tolkein-esque influence, marks him for attention when the sequel appears.

John Gilbert



THE CITY, NOT LONG AFTER

*Pat Murphy
Publisher Pan Books
Format HB £12.95*

 Apocalypse is seductive not only for mad generals and ageing actors; dozens of SF writers fall to its siren-call every year. The erasure of 99% of society and all its complexity makes constructing a future world much easier, in Murphy's case overcrowding, money and art critics are little missed. The city of the title is San Francisco, turned into a ghost town by a worldwide plague. Those who remain are mainly artists; their community is subtly governed and disputes over which art piece is to go where are handled by debate — and the determination/insanity of those in conflict. It's a sort of anarchic utopia.

Unfortunately, what striking scenes the SF setting makes possible are counterbalanced by points where the author seems to be simply making things easy for herself. Apocalypse provides endless amounts of free art materials, from paint to the Golden Gate bridge, free food means there's no need to farm and there aren't even any parents to please or offend. Given her obvious skills, one wishes Murphy had tried to set her anarchic community in a modern setting. After all, didn't Haight-Ashbury struggle with its own anarchic, psychedelic community in the Sixties? As it is, the novel, like much of SF, casually drifts above the surface of reality making only fleeting contact with its awkward texture.

Yet for all its causal pace and slow, persuasive narrative there is a Threat, the promise of an Incident which will give the characters' lives some point, some meaning. Unfortunately the Incident which threatens San Francisco's artistic community is absurdly clear-cut. Namely, occupation by troops led by a mad general. The artists evacuate their few children, hide in the sewers and attempt to terrify the troops with artwork. An interesting idea perhaps, but weakened by the Pentagon's own dedication to psychological warfare. The Army has

ACTION AND MONSTROSITY

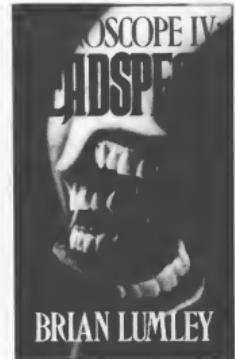
NECROSCOPE IV: DEADSPEAK

*Brian Lumley
Publisher Kinnell
Format HB £14.95*

 Harry Keogh is stripped of his ability to talk with the dead, his mind raped by his own vampire son after investigating the Wamphyri strongholds of Sunside/Starside. Harry Jnr wants to ensure that his father is no threat to his vampiric life; after all, family bonds can be severely tested where the undead are concerned.

But the legions of the dead need to contact Harry. A new evil force, the last of the vampiric Ferenczy family has crawled from his underground hiding place, buoyed up by the blood of his gypsy servants, and is about to cast his vampiric seed onto all areas of human life. He is the cruellest of Wamphyri and, in order to defeat him, Harry Keogh must rely on the aid of his old arch-enemy Faethor Ferenczy who, until now, has been just an old thing in the ground.

Like the vampires it so full-bloodedly portrays, Brian Lumley's Necroscope series just gets stronger. His lively mix of action and monstrosity transmutes the base cliché of the vampire and turns it into a wonderfully contemporary bane.



More of these fantasies are planned, but it is still surprising that Lumley is only now getting the attention which he deserves.

John Gilbert



even experimented with using LSD on enemy troops, so the divide between military and artists isn't as awesome as Murphy would have us believe.

When the artists begin sneaking out at night, using knock-out darts and painting 'Dead' on unconscious soldiers, realism is seriously weakened. Core problems of war — how to deal with collaborators, react under torture, sacrifice doomed allies — are simply not addressed. Other than a commitment to re-establishing the USA, the soldiers have no motivating force, their occupation consists simply of patrolling. Treating the enemy as stupidly misguided really isn't that much better than saying they're evil demons. Also, the testing of the artists' commitment to non-violence is left until late, when the simplistic argument is made that murder is acceptable if the murderer effectively commits suicide soon after.

But these criticisms are made only because the novel does take itself seriously, and is written so well that you do expect a lot from it. The quality of the writing ensures that you keep reading, while characterisation is convincing and sympathetic — making a gentle romance compelling reading. Cliché characters, such as a man who calls himself Machine, are given an unexpected freshness. Then there are the mythic undertones; while a ghostly peace march distracting a soldier at a timely moment is poor, a mechanical angel is a genuinely haunting image. Overall, this is an impressive first novel, compulsively readable and interesting.

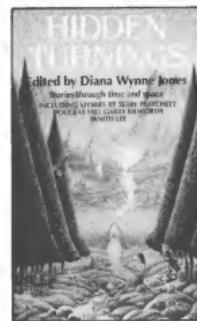
Stuart Wynne



HIDDEN TURNINGS STORIES THROUGH TIME AND SPACE

*Edited by Diana Wynne Jones
Publisher Mandarin
Format PB £2.99*

 With an eye to satisfying all tastes, Wynne Jones has selected twelve diverse 'stories of the imagination' by her own favourite fantasy writers. Her collection may well impress some new readers of this genre but not its loyal fans. Douglas Hill's 'Kafkaesque' opener impressed me by its inventiveness and exciting execution. Sadly, however, it served only to underline the weaknesses of subsequent stories.



I found Tanith Lee's 'Ceres Passing' particularly dull; pretending to invoke Earth-mother magic it only succeeded in being tedious and coy. Its frivolity better suited to the pages of Jackie. The plot of Robert Westall's 'Fifty-Fifty' was trite, sloppily constructed and its characters insipid. Other contributors, on the other hand, seemed to think that an imaginary story can only be produced with no attempt at all to create believable situations and characters. Douglas Hill's 'True Believer', along with Gary Kilworth's adroit 'Dogfaerie', with its imaginatively conceived plot and rustic mysticism, were glowing exceptions. Both writers sustained my interest with their atmospheric creation of real fantasy, enriched with apt, sharp (and, overall, realistic) touches of characterisation. Terry Pratchett supplied the originality and skilful prose we have learned to expect with his story 'Turntables Of The Night', but he is not, in my view, the star of this collection.

Wynne Jones has been deliberately restrained in her selection: there are no gory corpses to disturb conscientious parents. However, again perhaps, because her book is aimed at all ages, she has also banished the irony and humour that traditionally accompany sensationalist writing. This work, then, raises the question of how mild can you be in this genre and still maintain effectiveness? How, on their performance here, all these contributors kept Wynne Jones 'on the edge of her seat, or awake all night, or gently chuckling', I really cannot imagine.

Benjamin Dowell



FEAR FORUM

Our first letter comes from an enterprising FEAR reader who realised that if Stephen King wouldn't come to Dorset, then it might be necessary to catch the author closer to home. If you're one of those undead, globe-trotting types who would travel the world just to get on our letters' page, then send the tales of your midnight ramblings to: FEAR FORUM, NEWSFIELD, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1JW.

KING AND COUNTRY...

Dear FEAR

I was flicking through the August 1989 edition of FEAR when I came across the article on Stephen King and his home town of Bangor in Maine... and of this town's parallels with my favourite novel, *It*. On reading this piece I was instantly inspired to save my hard-earned wages and make the journey across the Atlantic Ocean to visit the town where my favourite author has made his home.

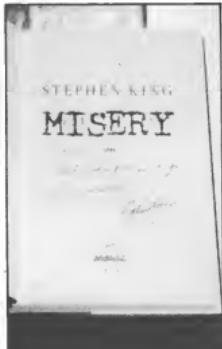
And what a time I had!

Before I go on I'd better tell you that yes, I am a writer (no big surprises here) and I am struggling to get some work in print. Anyway, a month before I was scheduled to leave for Bangor, the idea hit me to hack up a quick story for Stephen King. I could post it through his letterbox, I thought, with some excitement. So I packed this story in my suitcase along with my spare underwear, clean shirts etc, and took off for Bangor, Maine.

Bangor is really a great little city, and everybody there is just about as friendly as possible. The night I arrived I took myself off to the cinema opposite the shopping mall and watched Clive Barker's *Nightbreed*. I got talking to the cab driver on the way back to my



Jonathan Youers outside the king mansion



cost, took me up to see Stephen King's house. It was pretty dark but the house has this glow about it that just makes it unmissable. There were no lights on. The late February snow was unbroken in the garden. Back at my hotel, I realised that King's house was but a ten minute walk away.

I managed to get hold of the

hotel, telling him that I was in Bangor hoping to see Stephen King. This cabby then, at no extra telephone number of Stephen King's office and gave them a call, telling them all about me and requesting to meet Mr King. Of course, they said no. Undeterred, I had a second attempt. Of course, they said no... Stephen's not feeling too well at the moment. So I left it at that, and asked them if I could drop my story off at their office for them to give him when he was feeling a little better. Sure, said they. That would be fine.

So that was what I did.

You ought to see the office, it is a Stephen King museum. It is beautiful. I could have stayed in there all day.

I gave Shirley (Stephen King's secretary) my story and left. I never met Stephen King.

But I did catch a glimpse of him... twice.

On both occasions he was going into his house. He's quite a big guy, and both times I saw him he was wearing a brown leather jacket, faded blue jeans and bas-

ketball sneakers. I stood at his gate, wanting to shout out to him. But my mouth was frozen and I could only look on as he walked in through the side door. I also saw Tabitha King, but none of their three kids.

Everybody in Bangor seems to know Stephen King, and to them he's really no big celebrity. None of them could believe that I, a mere nineteen year-old factory worker from England, would want to travel halfway across the world just to see Steve.

So I had my little holiday, managing to live in the novel *It* for a whole ten days. I heard nothing more from King's office about the story, so I assumed that he got bored with it and trashed it.

One week after I returned to England I received a parcel from Bangor. I knew instantly that it was from the office because I recognised the address on the front of the Jiffy. I tore it open to find a copy of Stephen King's *Misery*. Inside, it was signed: *For Jonathan Youers. Best wishes from your Number One fan. Sorry I missed you!* *Stephen King.*

Nobody living on the face of the earth could possibly have had any remote inkling of the joy I felt when I read that message. It was sent by the angels.

I was on Cloud Nine.

I guess he liked my story! *Jonathan Youers, Beaminster, Dorset*

...A FREE COUNTRY?

Dear FEAR

My first taste of FEAR was Issue 19, which I am very impressed with.

Since I am a newcomer to your magazine I unfortunately have not read Vanessa Coutts' letter on censorship, but the gist of her case seems clear from the letters written in reply, and I would like to add a thought or two.

Basically I am in agreement with those who demand the right to decide for themselves what they shall or shall not see, hear or read. I am greatly concerned about the immense power vested in bodies like the BBFC. In this area as in many others, British law seems to give rulings which are fair and just but which are irrelevant because of the huge cost of enforcing them. It's rather like taking someone who is very rich to court. You may get a judgement in favour first, then lose on appeal, then let it go because you simply can't afford to take the matter further. This is the sort of legislation that makes a nonsense out of the idea that we live in a free country.

Having said that, I think the basic problem with censorship is not the questionable material itself but the way in which it probably would be forced on people if certain current restrictions

were relaxed. It is not true by any means that a free market economy is the highest practical expression of freedom, because such noble thoughts ignore the appalling power of advertising. Modern advertising is quite capable of inducing people to buy things against their will, and the sheer market power of any big company is quite sufficient guard against those few people who consequently react against hype.

It would be sensible for censorship to be relaxed. Restrictions only create a black market which makes lots of money for criminal types. But any material containing lots of sex or violence, or both, would have to be advertised by description only — no hype. Of course, 'lots' of would have to be legally defined, and the restrictions could only be enforced by a genuinely strong central government that was also reasonably efficient. But those are the trade-offs, as the Americans say.

Paul Nash, London N17

THE LAST WORD?

Dear FEAR
I object to censorship. However, I also object to time-wasting, which is what I will be doing if I put across the case against censorship in a letter to your magazine. You, like myself, are probably very tired of reading 'anti censorship' letters, so why not send them to the people who should read them? Simply, I am asking if you will print an address so that those of us who wish to may write directly to the BBFC.

We should demand to see *written* censorship guidelines and if they have none, ask them why not. We have to act now, as censorship can only become more intense and restricting — it is rarely reversed.

I would also ask that you print my full address so that anyone with information on censorship, or who is willing to fight censorship positively, may contact me. An organised group will fight better than isolated individuals.

James Waplington, 13 Pinders Grove, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF1 4AH

You will probably have noticed that in FEAR Issue 19 it was mentioned that the BBFC publishes annual reports on its activities, obtainable from BBFC, 3 Soho Square, London W1V 5DE. You might also like to write to them with your views... Good luck!

BLOOD 'N' GUTS

Dear FEAR
Having read Julian Petley's article 'The Exploitation Game' in Issue 18, I felt I had to write and air my views on other magazines' attitudes towards horror.

As well as FEAR, I also buy

Fangoria and, on occasion, Gorezone, and totally agree with Mr Petley's view that all they are interested in are 'blood 'n' guts'. It would seem, too, that so is the American public, and I quote from a letter to Gorezone: 'I just saw Waxwork. What a waste! I expected to see buckets loads of blood and an equal amount of vomit-inducing gore...' You get the picture?

Meanwhile, English mags like Starburst do the opposite. They show no 'gory' pictures as such, but offer well-written reviews. The only problem is, no one seems to like horror movies at their offices! Let's hope they get their act together and pay more attention to the horror genre. The 1990s promise to be a great decade.

G Jukes, Warley, West Midlands

It's true that many UK magazines seem to shy away from the grotesque. One of the reasons is that they hope for a happy shelf life without being banned; but you should also remember that magazines such as Starburst focus on the very different world of SF to the exclusion of almost everything else. We, of course, will continue to be disgusting.

AFTER TWILIGHT

Dear FEAR

I have read several issues of FEAR, and truly believe that its quality surpasses that of the now dead-and-buried Twilight Zone magazine. Yours is top of the line stuff, and I only wish that there was a horror magazine in the US which could even hope to compare. The illustrations are first rate, and the brightly colored cover is what caught my attention in the first place, and kept it there. Keep up the good work!
Jana Hakes, Fairfield, Ohio

NO ZONE FRIENDLY

Dear FEAR

In Issue 20 I read in the video rental section of a film called Shadowzone reviewed by Patience Coster. Good God, it's got 5 skulls! So I rushed out to rent it.

After about half an hour's viewing I began to think, has Patience really seen this film or is she getting confused with Alien or The Thing? But no! She said it was a low budget film — and it is. God, is it low! Sets are naff, storyline is so slow and predictable, with corny set pieces. Patience made one outstanding comment: 'An object lesson in how to remake Alien for under a tenner'. Isn't that a gem? Who the hell cares?

Patience is aptly named for this video, you'll need a lot of that. For those who as yet haven't been able to find Shadowzone, let me spoil the film and tell you the closing sentence. Picture the



Wanted to catch the Stephen King scoop but were out of the country? Well, here's your chance to pick up on FEAR.

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NEXT ISSUE

FEAR

● CELEBRATES H P LOVECRAFT'S CENTENARY with a critique of his work by horror writer

Ramsey Campbell and an overview of Cthulu films — made and unmade — by Stephen Jones. Fans will miss it at their peril.

● TALKS TO FRANK HENENLOTTER about one of the most notorious sequels ever made — Basketcase 2.

● VISITS THE BRITISH FANTASY CONVENTION with an introduction by BFS President Ramsey Campbell and a special BFS bulletin guide to the fantasy gathering of the year.

● LOOKS AT THE SELLING OF NIGHTBREED, and ponders why such a generally acclaimed film has so far received such poor marketing.

PLUS...
TAD WILLIAMS tells of his sequel to The Dragonbone Chair... JULIAN LLOYD WEBBER conducts a symphony of darkness... STEPHEN GALLAGHER'S CHIMERA appears on television... and more pustulating FEAR fiction led by Prime Evil winner James Lovegrove.

FEAR ISSUE
No. 22
ON SALE
SEPTEMBER 13

scene: girl (unknown) NUDE throughout the film, asleep (on her back) in a hibernation capsule wakes up and says (whilst coyly covering her breasts, which we have had various angles of during the film): 'What happened?' Our hero says (he started the film and is the only one left — they always are): 'It's a long story...' ROLL CREDITS.

Well, well, my, my, shoot my in the foot — isn't that original? What a finish, it about sums up the film. YAWN!

On a more serious note, I have seen *Wizards Of The Lost Kingdom* 2 and most of the action it appears is taken from *Barbarian Queen* starring Lana Clarkson by Medusa. Is this so? I would value your comments, but not with patience.

T W Anderson, Pittington, Co Durham

NORMAN CONQUEST

Dear FEAR

I think John Gilbert's rant against Barry Norman was both unfair and unjustified. Norman enthusiastically praised the excellent Society, and raved about what was surely the best and most horrific film of last year (*The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*), so it's hardly fair to say that he has a mental block when it comes to horror. Considering how many films come out for review, I think he does a pretty good job of bringing lesser known films to public attention.

Also, it's hard to see any justification for reviewing a film like *A Nightmare On Elm Street* 5 anyway — the series is long past any innovation, instead it's just a cynical marketing exercise to sell to people what they've already bought before. What's the point of reviewing a film which is almost certainly impervious to reviews, and which is hardly even attempting to convert new fans?

An enormous amount of horror films are released, and a vast proportion are dreadful. You can't expect Barry Norman to appreciate Robert Englund's violent and stupid efforts. A specialist magazine like FEAR does a great job in unearthing the few gems which turn up in spite of tiny budgets and no established talent, but

surely FEAR exists precisely because mainstream movie magazines and review programmes can't cover the horror genre in any great depth?

It's surely the case that a lot of the things which make horror films good are the exact opposite of what normally goes to make a great film. Certainly many people enjoy horror movies (myself included) and they obviously have their virtues, but you can't seriously expect them to be treated with the same respect as Woody Allen or Meryl Streep. Charles Thompson, Cambridge

PS: I HATE the skull ratings — how tacky can you get?

A BAD YEAR FOR THE MOVIES?

Dear FEAR

I would like to start by stating that I fully appreciate the value and disadvantage of differing tastes and preferences. I very rarely agree with everything a good reviewer might care to say or write about a genre film, but in general I usually approve of their conclusions as to whether a movie is good, bad or just mediocre. If it's a supposedly appalling film, the chances are I'll probably pay to see it anyway, just to make up my own mind. Of course, if it's been described as 'The Movie Of The Year', then there's no way I'm going to miss it and quite naturally I would be expecting to watch some pretty excellent stuff.

But I have to say that I disagree entirely with John Gilbert's rather exaggerated opinion of Society. After reading his highly enthusiastic and favourable review, I found time to go and see it a couple of days after it opened at the cinema complex in Milton Keynes (it was fortunate I didn't leave it much longer because when I was only screened here for a week.)

I attended the showing on a Saturday evening and expected the theatre to be fairly full, but found much to my surprise that about three quarters of the seats were still vacant by the time the film started. Ninety minutes later, I realised why.

As always, I reserved judgement until the very end of the

movie and when the credits finally began to roll I immediately made my impression clear when I joined with the rest of the very small audience in one long groan of disapproval. How could Mr Gilbert possibly justify Society as being anything more than an imaginative, above average genre movie?

I tried to forget this brief episode, but became infuriated when in the August edition he reviewed the film again, this time shortly after its video release, and not only awarded it a five out of five skull rating and reiterated his claim that it was 'The Movie Of The Year', but also recommended readers to actually waste their money and purchase the video!

If John Gilbert really believes that Society is 'The Movie Of The Year' then all I can say is that he hasn't seen many movies this year.

Darren Collett, Milton Keynes, Bucks

SWORD AND SORCERY

Dear FEAR

Numerous apologies. I confess that I did not fill in the questionnaire way back in the dark days of March. I was going to, honestly. I had every intention of doing so but then it slipped my mind and it was too late. Please forgive me.

The subtle transformation in July's edition of FEAR was stunning. It has taken me four mouth-watering weeks to pore through it, page by delightful page. I was particularly interested in the Danny Elfman article, perhaps you may feature more composers (James Horner, Alan Silvestri, Jack Nietsche) in the coming months. The August edition has arrived. I haven't yet opened it — I'm savouring the moment.

Now perchance you will call off Oliver Frey's mad, bad blood-splattered swordsmen. You see, he's here now. I've turned out the lights so he'll think nobody's home, but when I peek through the curtains he's still standing there on the front path waiting for me patiently, the glow of the street lamp flashing off his blade. Please, just call him off...

Colin T Nicholls, Stretford, Manchester

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